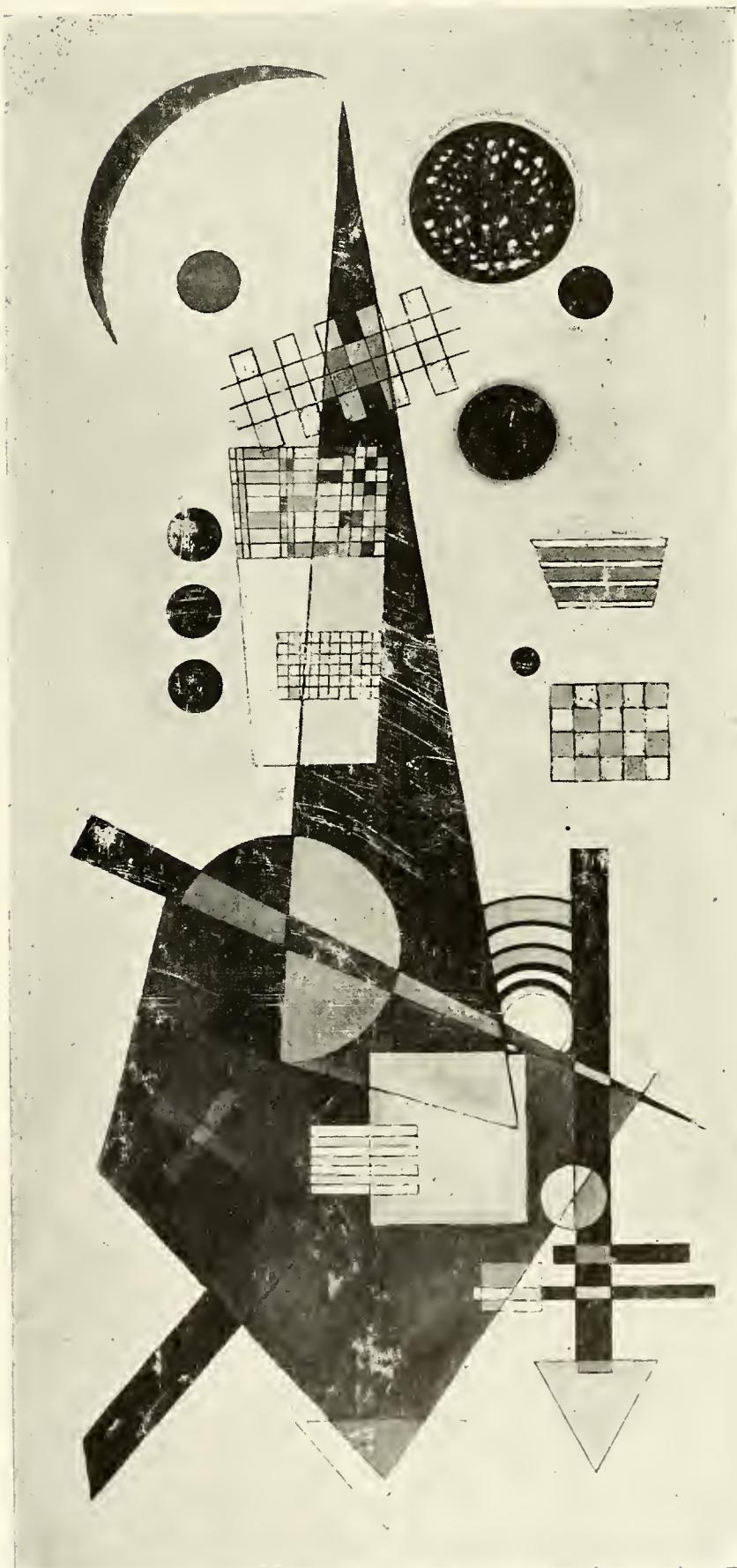
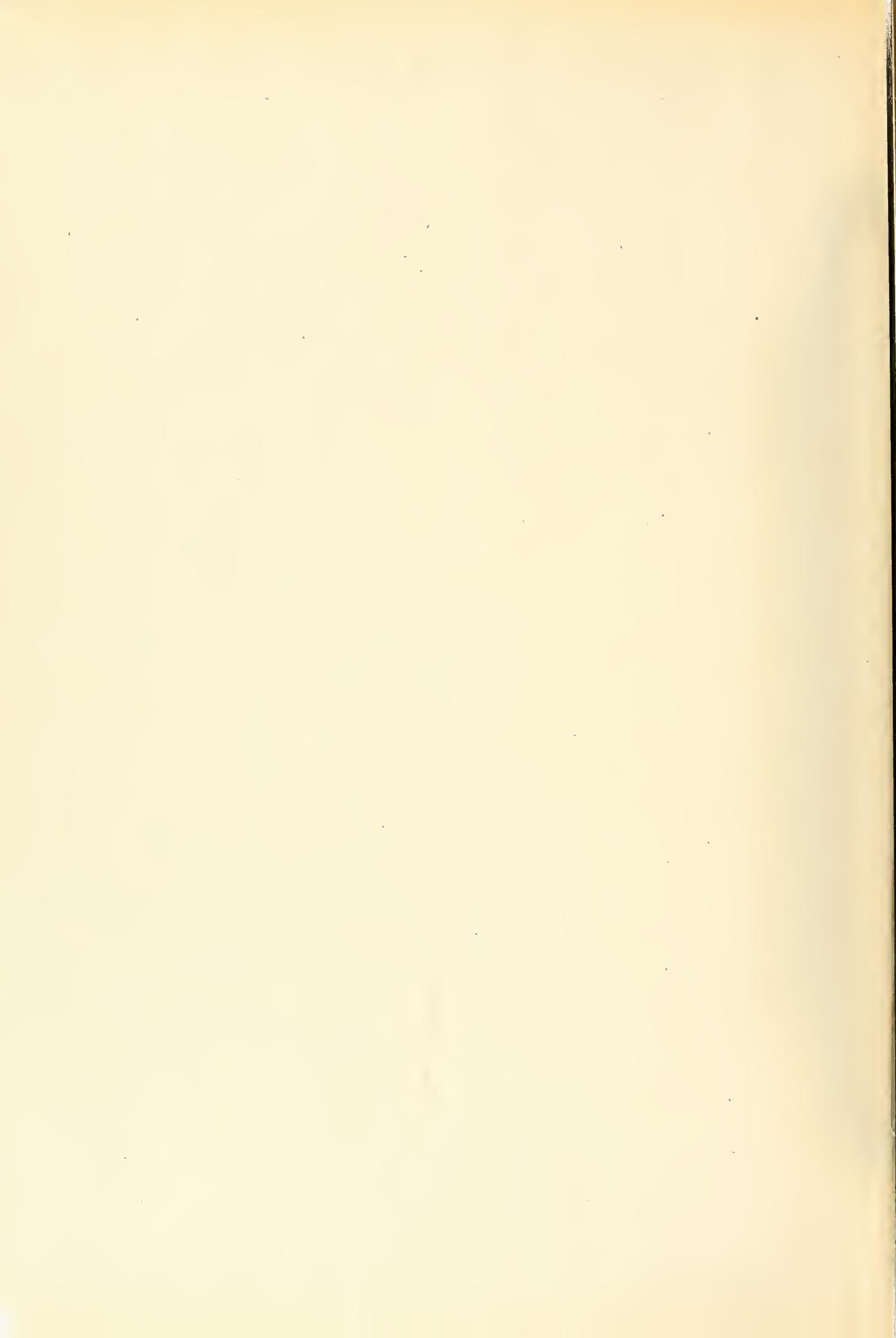
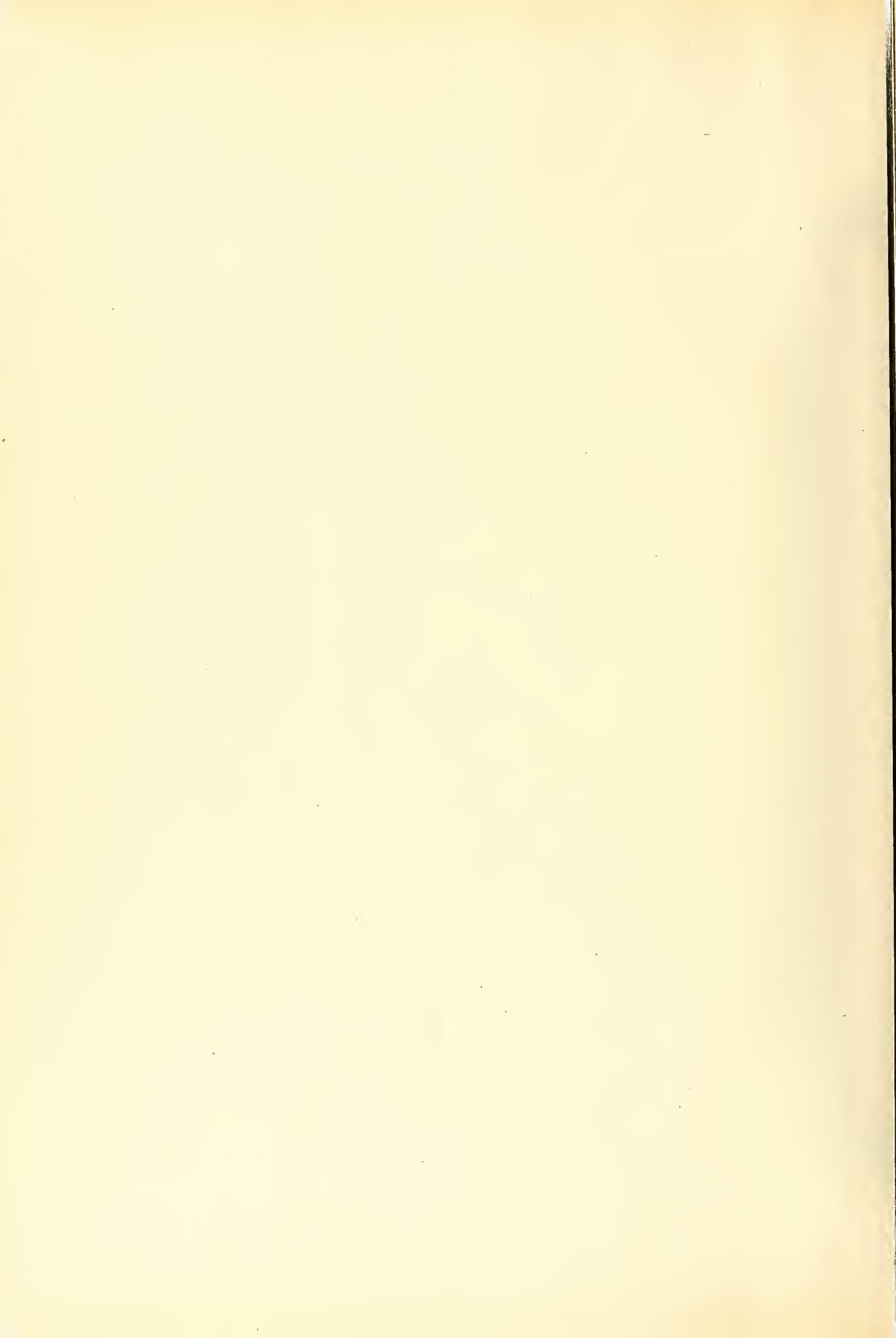


KANDINSKY









Dedicated to the memory of three great men,
whose intuitive vision and integrity equalled
their knowledge and unerring devotion to art.

Their recent deaths impoverished France
and all those, to whom the upkeep of
aesthetic culture is of essential necessity.

TO THE INSPIRED ROBERT DELAUNAY

TO THE IDEALISTIC IVANHOE RAMBOSSON

TO THE NOBLE FELIX FENEON



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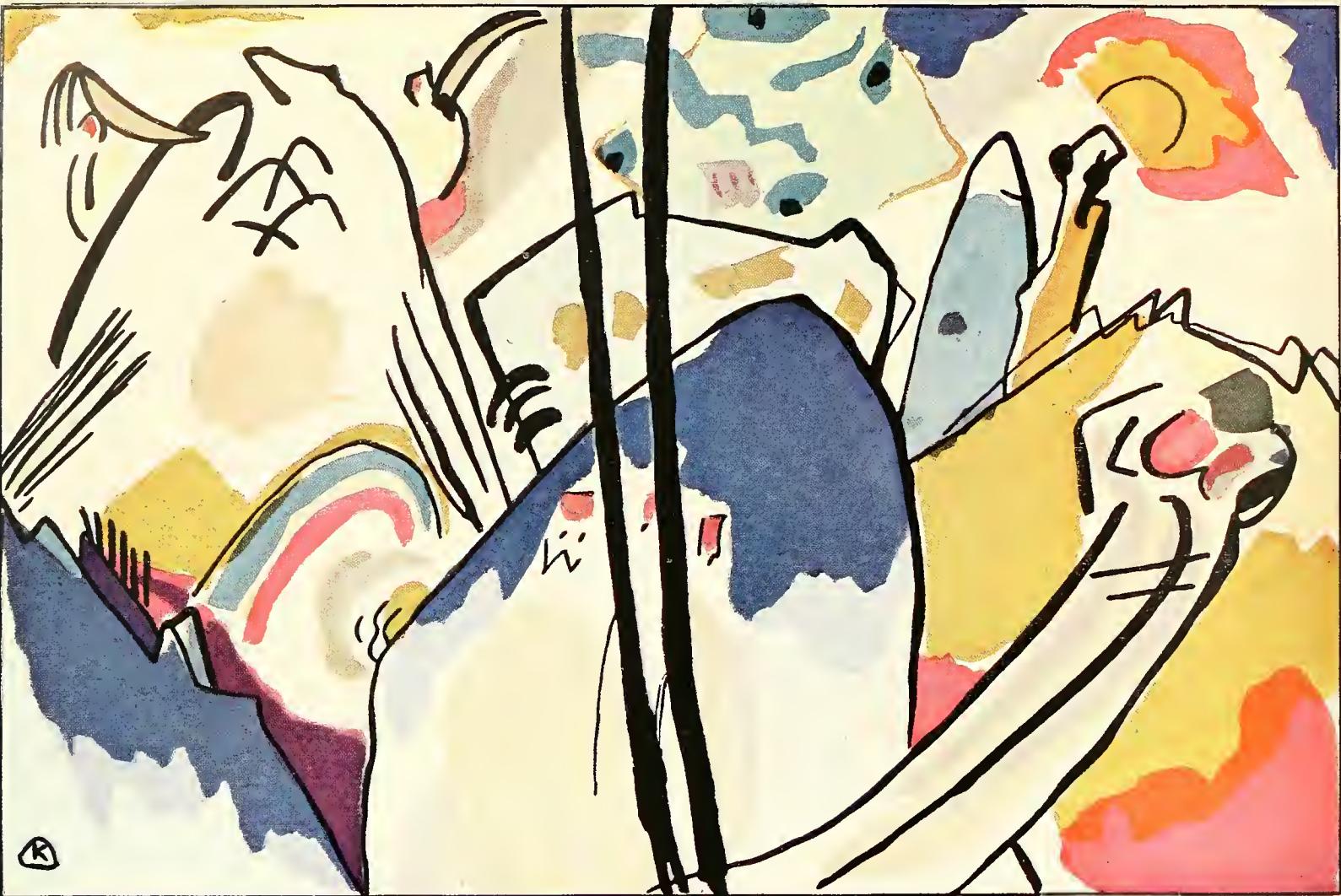
KANDINSKY

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John Lewis Key



WATERCOLOR, SKETCH BY KANDINSKY FOR COMPOSITION NO. 4

1911

IN MARCH 1911 KANDINSKY EXPLAINED ONE OF HIS EARLY OBJECTIVE ABSTRACTIONS COMPOSITION NO. 4 AS FOLLOWS:

1. Retrospective Definition.

Masses (of the weight)

Colour below in the middle — blue (contributes to the whole a cold sound).
upper right hand corner — split blue, red and yellow.

Lines left hand upper corner — black lines of horses (knotted).
lower right hand corner — stretched lines of the lying.

2. CONTRASTS

of the masses to the lines, of the definite to the vague, of knotted lines to colored knots.
And as the main contrast an angled sharp movement (battle) to the light cold sweet colors.

3. OVERFLOWINGS

of the color to the contours. The completed contour of the castle is reduced only through the influence of the sky over the contour.

4. 2 CENTERS

1. of the knotted lines.

2. of the modelled angle of the blue which are separated through vertical black lines,

(spears). The whole composition is intended to be light with many sweet colors, which often absorb each other; the yellow is also cold.

This light—sweet—cold, presents the main contrast in the picture by moving to an angle (conflict). It seems that here this contrast (as compared with composition No. 2) is still stronger and therefore appears harder, more distinct.

It possesses as an advantage, a more precise influence, and as a disadvantage a slightly overdone precision.

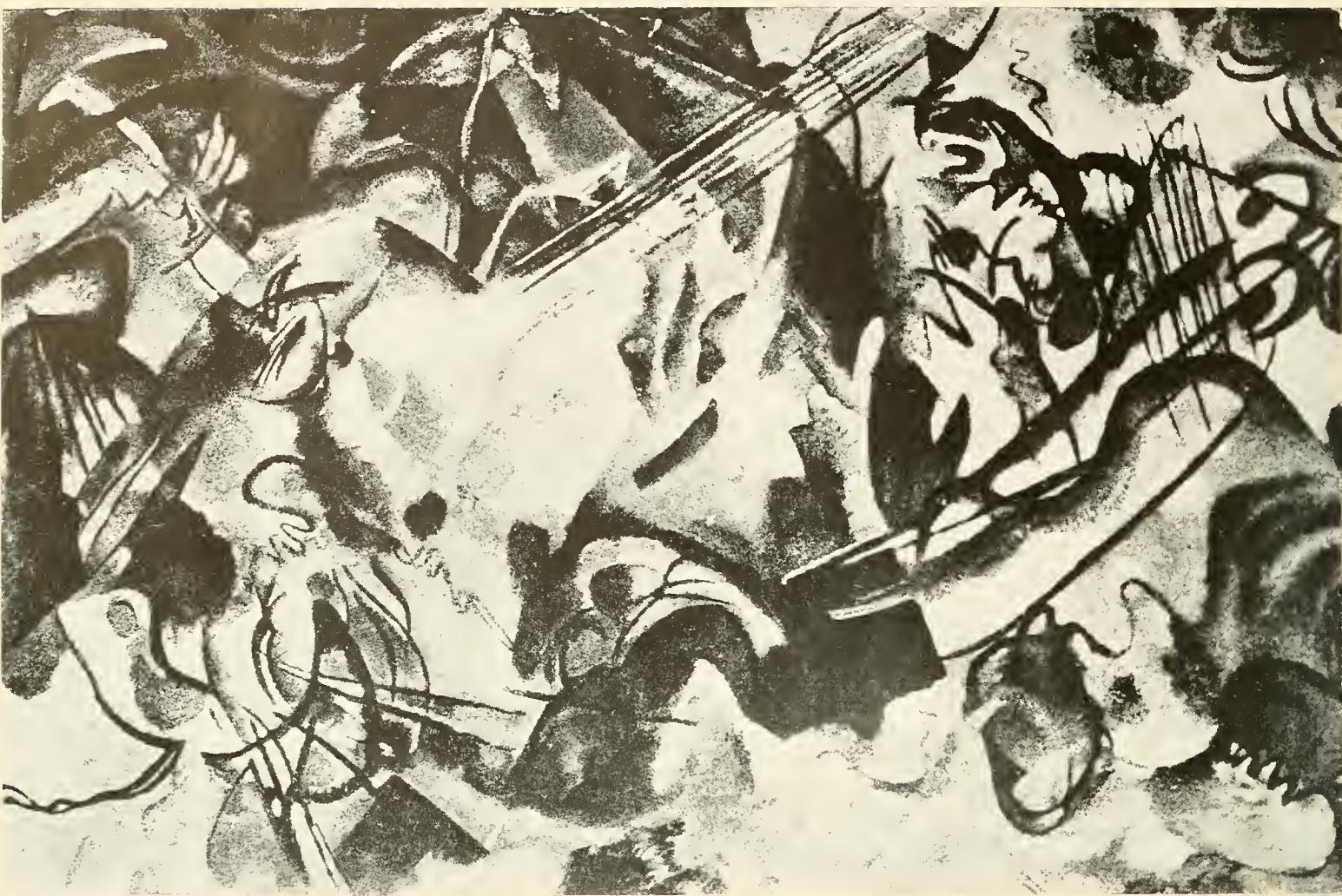
As a basis are placed the following elements:

1. The consonants of inactive masses.
2. a quick movement of the parts directed mainly to the upper right hand corner.
3. the main movement in an angle is pointed toward the upper left hand corner.
4. the opposition of both directions (in the direction towards the right we notice the flowing of smaller forms, the others flow to the left).
5. the consonants of the masses with the lines which lie open.
6. The contrasting of the smudged forms to the contours (also the line in the sense of the line (apropos to No. 5) and as a contour where it is supposed to sound as a line).
7. The overflowing of the colors over the limits of the form.
8. The preponderance of the sound of the colors over the sound of the form.
9. Diffusions.



COMPOSITION NO. 4

1911



COMPOSITION NO. 6

1913

HOW KANDINSKY EXPLAINED COMPOSITION NO. 6, ONE OF HIS LAST OBJECTIVE ABSTRACTIONS IN EARLY MAY OF 1913

This picture I was bearing in mind for one and $\frac{1}{2}$ years. And often it seemed to me that perhaps I would not achieve it. The point of departure was the deluge. This point of departure was a mirrored picture which I have made rather more for my own pleasure.

Here different objective forms are given, which are sometimes merry (it amused me to compose earnest forms with amusing expressions), nudes, arches, animals, palms, flashes, rain, etc.

As the mirrored picture was ready, I found myself wishing to work this theme over into a composition, and it was rather clear to me in which way I would have to do it.

But very soon this feeling disappeared, and I found myself lost in objective forms which I painted so as to make the comprehension of this picture more clear and distinct. Instead of clearness, however, I found indistinctness.

In several sketches I dissolved the objective forms and in others I tried to achieve the impression in a more abstract way. But this did not work either.

The reason for it was, that myself while being forced to render the expression of the deluge, I did not listen to the expression of the word "deluge."

Not the inner sound, but the exterior expression was dominating me. Weeks passed and I tried again, but still without results.

I also tried the already tested way of giving up for a time the task, so as to be able to take a sudden look at the sketches with fresh eyes. Then it was that I discovered the correct approach but I was still unable to separate the kernel from the shell: I remembered the serpent which could not get out of its old skin. The skin was very much dead, but it stuck to the serpent, which in this case was the object.

In the same way for a year and a half there would

stick to me the element of the catastrophe of the deluge, which is alien to the inner sense of the picture.

My mirrored picture was at that time on exhibition. But it returned and as I saw it again, I was immediately again where I was, when I had first completed that mirrored picture. But I already had my doubts and thought that I would never complete the big picture.

Nevertheless from time to time I would give a look at the mirror picture which hung in my studio. And every time I would react the same way, firstly by the colors and then by the compositional work and then by the form of design in itself which all was without any relation to the object.

This mirrored picture appeared so separated from myself, that I was astonished I had painted it. However, it made its impression on me, like many other things or ideas; which have the power through their vibrations to awaken in me purely artistic conceptions and which brought me finally to the creation of a picture.

At last the day came when a quiet inner feeling made me entirely sure of myself. I immediately produced nearly without any corrections a definite last sketch, which nearly practically seemed to satisfy me; and I felt sure that under normal circumstances I would paint this painting. As soon as I got the canvas I immediately proceeded to the drawing. It went so fast that nearly everything was satisfactory.

In two or three days the picture as a whole was there. The struggle to master the canvas was over, therefore if for some reason I would have to give up to paint, the picture would still be there: the main work was done. Then came the extremely delicate pleasant and nevertheless strenuous process of harmonizing the different parts of the picture with each other. Formerly I would have been much bothered where I found something objectively wrong and would have felt obliged to improve it. Yet the experience of years had taught me, that sometimes the error in a painting does not lie in the space where we look for it. And that one makes a right correction of the left hand lower corner only by correcting something out of balance in the upper right hand corner. If the left hand cup of the scales goes down too low, the point is to put more weight on the right hand cup and then the left one will soon rise its weight all by itself.

The strenuous search in the picture of such right hand cup, the trembling of the left one which occurs through the smallest change in design and color in some place, which cause vibrations to the whole of a painting. All these infinitely alive, immensely sensitive elements in a picture, if when correctly painted, evolve a third momentum of beauty and suffering in the process of painting.

Such infinitely small possibilities of weight which should be used and which exercise such a strong influence on the whole conception of the picture's marvelous exacti-

tude is the action of the hidden law, which through fortunate circumstances influences the artist and which he obediently follows — all this appears as tempting, as the first dynamic sketching of the big masses on the canvas itself.

To each of these moments corresponds a certain tension. And many a wrong or incompletely picture owes its sad fate to the fact that wrong tensions were applied.

In this picture one sees two centers:

1. On the left the delicate, pinkish, slightly vague center with feeble, uncertain lines in the middle.

2. On the right (slightly higher than the left one) the rude, red-blue, a little out of key, with sharp, malignant strong and very precise lines.

Between these two centers there is a third one (closely to the left one) which only later on is discovered to be a center, but on a final count will be considered as the main center.

Here the pink and the white are mixed in a foam which gives the impression of neither lying on the canvas nor on any ideal plane. Rather it seems to hang in the air and appears to be surrounded with haze. Such an absence of a plane and an uncertainty of distance may be observed for instance in Russian steam baths. A human figure standing amid the steam seems to be neither close nor far; it is "somewhere."

This "somewhere" of the main center produces the decisive impression of the picture. I worked so much upon this problem, until I attained what I was ceaselessly striving for from the first. And which I later incorporated into the innerly desired form. The smaller form of this picture called for something very plain, yet broad ("largo") with respect to influence. For this purpose I used long solemn lines, which I had already used in Composition 4.

It was good to see the new way in which the previously used measure could be put to work. Those lines are connected with those above them, which are in a cross direction to the former and are thick and decisive. The two systems of lines are in conflict with each other.

To soften the dramatic vibration of the lines, that is in order to retouch their dramatically intruding element (to put, so to say, a muzzle on this element), I placed on the picture a display of a whole fugue of pink spots. They give the great disturbance a certain calm and provide an objective outlook to the whole drama. This solemn and calm character is underscored also by the various blue spots which contribute to an inner warmth. The warm influence of this essentially cold color increases again the dramatic element in an art which thus again becomes noble and non-objective.

The entirely deep brown forms (especially in the upper left hand corner) contribute a dull and very far sounding note, which reminds one of hopelessness.

Green and yellow bring life to the soul and provide it with the missing activity. I have also made decisive use here of the smoothness and the roughness of the canvas. This gives the spectator new experiences, even if he comes close to the canvas.

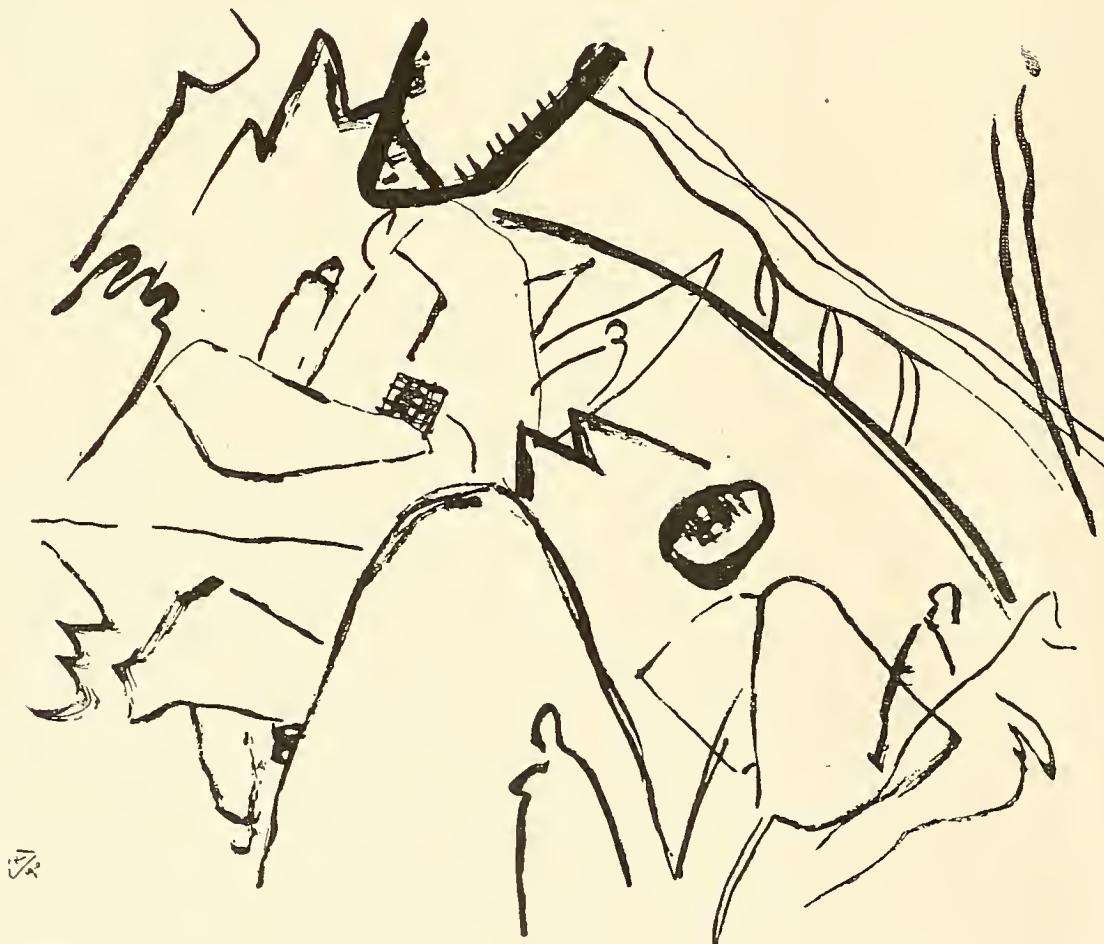
In this way all the elements, even those in contradiction to each other, are brought into complete inner balance, so neither of them wins preponderance.

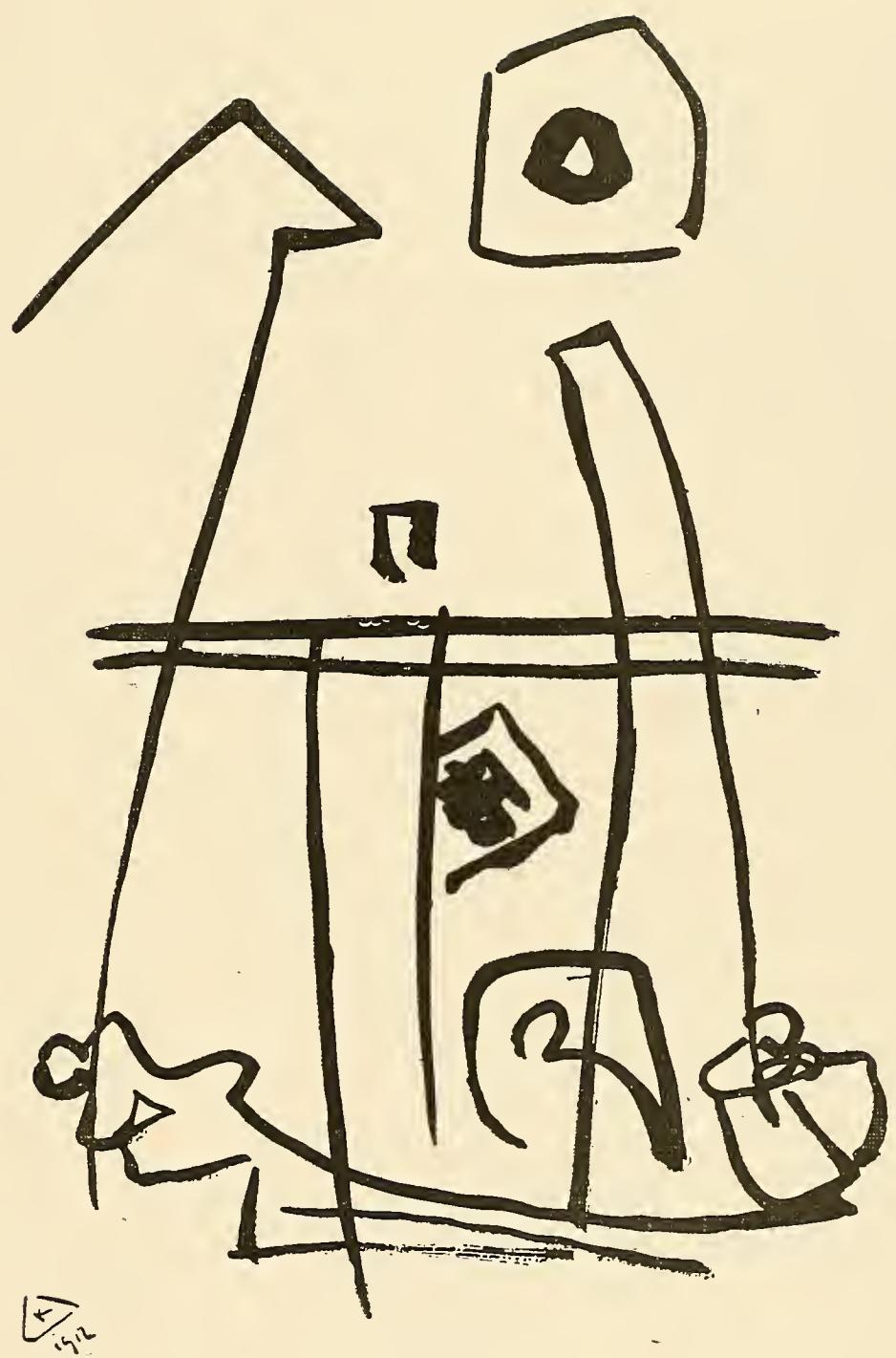
The original theme for the creation of the picture (originally the deluge) is dissolved into an innerly pure,

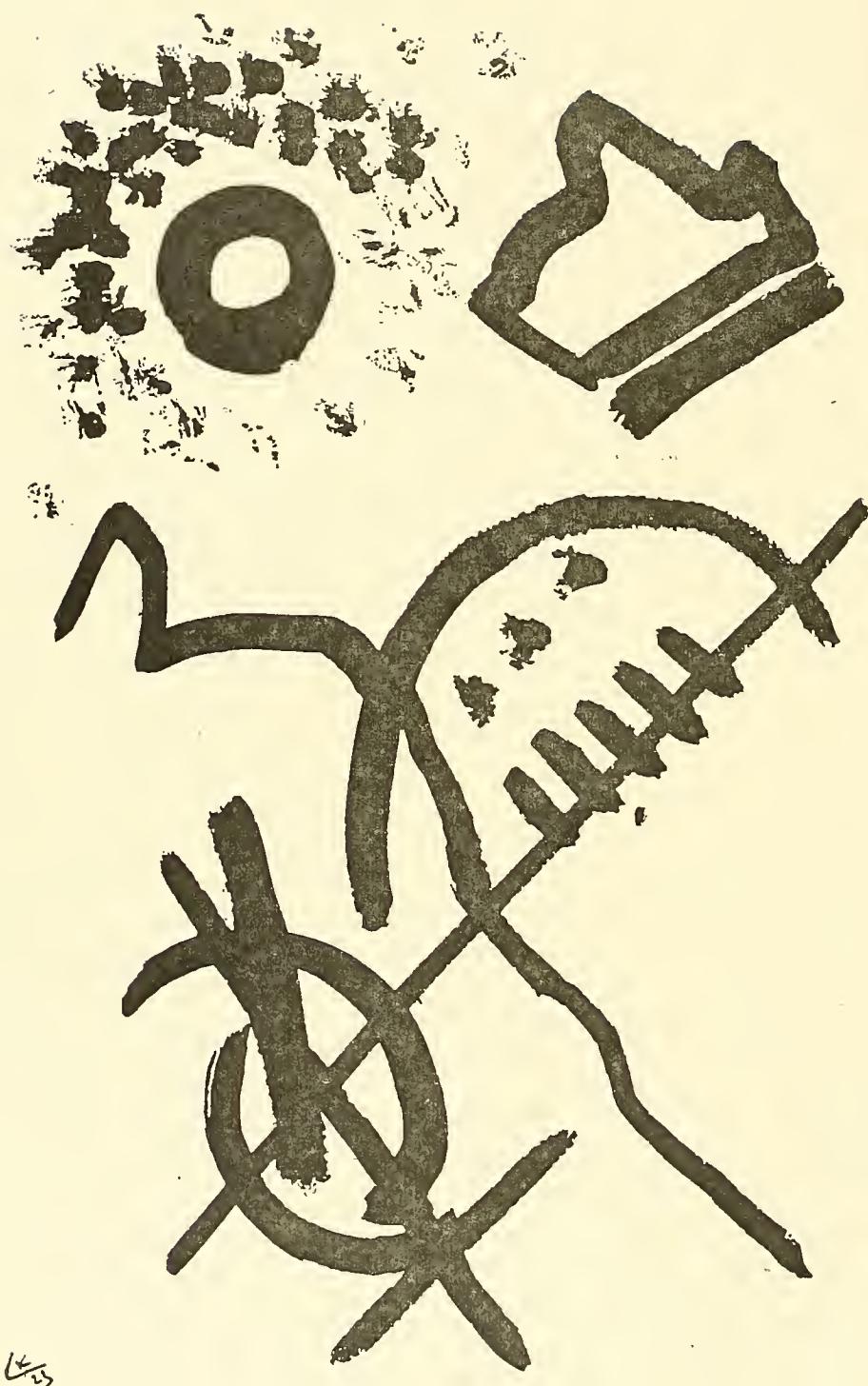
independent, almost non-objective essence. Nothing would be further from the truth than to brand-mark this picture as the representation of an event.

A significantly acting objective destruction is in such a way also a complete song of praise, a singular sound, which resounds like a hymn of new revival, which does follow every ruination.

May, 1913







ANALYSIS BY KANDINSKY ON HIS PAINTING CALLED "THE WHITE EDGE," WHICH IS PARTLY ABSTRACT AND ALREADY PARTLY NON-OBJECTIVE

I have made many sketches for this picture, as well as designs. The first sketch was made very soon after my return from Moscow in December 1912. It was the result, as is usually the case, of hard experiences in Moscow, or to be more exact of impressions made by Moscow itself. The first sketch was short and crowded. But already in the second one I used "dissolution" of colors and form-events in the right hand lower corner. In the left hand upper corner I left the motive of the "troika"** which I had conceived some time ago, and which I had used in several other paintings. This left corner had to be particularly simple, by which I mean, that the impression thereof had to be gained directly from the form. In the corner itself are white, indented lines which express a certain feeling, which I am unable to put into words. It may be that it evokes a feeling of certain obstacles, which the troika is unable to overcome. Described in this way the compositions acquire a repulsive, wooden expression. For instance the green color awakens often (or sometimes) in the soul an echo of summer vibrations. Freshness and clearness may, in such a case, contribute to the harmony of this impression. But it might become unpleasant, if this echo should become too clear and distinct, so that instead of reminding us of the summer season it would make us think of summer "pleasures" such, as for instance, how nice it would be to take off one's coat in summer without catching cold. Thus, as a consequence, we should adopt clearness and simplicity in the left hand upper corner and a smudged dissolution with small and dull dissolutions in the right hand upper corner. Likewise, as I often do, I have made use of two centers, although they are less independent here as for instance in Composition 6, where it would be possible to make two pictures out of one.

The center on left: a combination of standing forms which is related to the second center; the use of pure, very much resounding colors; the red slightly dissolved, the blue absorbed inwards (presenting a strong centro-filial movement.) Thus the means appear very simple, quite uncovered and clear.

The second center to the right: bent, thick forms (which cost me much work.) It has outward and inward pointed hooks (rather white) which give to its melancholic bend an energetic note of "inner simmering."

All this is submerged into dull blue tones (comparatively or perhaps even in an exaggerated way) which only occasionally succeed in producing a sound and which united together may contribute, to give to the upper form a somewhat egg-shaped surrounding. It is like a little realm by itself, which is not pasted on to an alien body, but which rather blooms on it like a flower. This somewhat egg-shaped form I have presented in a general way, so as to make it clear and yet so as not to be too conspicuous or insistant. I have for instance shown its limits clearly at the top, and hazily below. When following these limits with the eye one may experience many inner fluctuations, like those of waves. Both centers are separated from each other, yet they have a connection with each other, through the medium of many more or less distinct forms, which are partly plain spots, of green. This massing of the green I have often applied quite unconsciously yet, as I see it now, with a certain plan. I did not want to add to the strong movement of this picture any further disturbance. Much rather did I have the intention to show its unrest by emphasizing the quiet. However, an overdose of green and especially of Paris-blue was noticeable there (the frigidity of a dull sound) which, later on and not without considerable effort, I tried to eliminate from the picture.

My inner state of mind imposed on me the necessity of choosing between the simplicity of the left side and the two centers, and to apply a technique which I should perhaps call the technique of pressure. I pressed the brush against the canvas, which resulted in producing small sharp angles and lumps. This seemed to be quite correct and expedient — it seems that a certain technical disturbance, between the three described spots, was necessary.

In the lower left hand corner then arises a conflict in white and black, which is separated from the dramatic clearness of the upper left hand corner, by the use of Naples-yellow. I call the rolling of the indistinct black spots in the white an "inner brooding in an unclear form."

Similar to this is the opposed upper right hand corner, which, however, already belongs to the white rim. The work upon this white rim proceeded very slowly. All sketches were of no use to me; although the separate

** A team of three horses. I designate by this name a system of three lines running along together with certain deviations, which are bent towards the top. I came to this form by thinking of the lines on the backs of the horses in a Russian three-horse team.

forms finally became clear to me, I nevertheless could not make up my mind to paint the picture. I was in trouble. Week after week I contemplated the sketches only to feel, that I was not ripe for the work. Years of experience have taught me later, to use patience in such cases, and not to try to break the task over my knee.

So it happened that only after nearly five months I found myself again sitting in front of the second and larger sketch and suddenly understood what was missing: it was the white edge. I was even scared when I understood the fact, but nevertheless went immediately to the shop to order the canvas. The doubt about its size took at least half an hour (length 160 ? 180 ? 200 ?).

I tackled this white rim with the same capriciousness, with which it had imposed itself on my mind. On the left, below was the foundation; from here there rises up a white wave which then falls abruptly down; on the right of the picture the wave flows in a lazy snakelike movement. On the top of the right side it forms a small lake (in the spot, where the black brooding originates), which disappears in the direction of the left hand upper corner, so as to show itself for the first time in the definite form of white hooks.

Due to the fact that this white rim proved to be the solution of the whole picture, I have called by its name the picture itself.

May 1913

ON THE WHITE EDGE

The "White Edge," painted in 1913, belongs to Kandinsky's most important lyrical paintings; and to a period which he later on called his "dramatic one," due to the extraordinary fateful happenings in his life, during the years from 1910 to 1920. In 1937, speaking about the lyrical paintings of this period, Kandinsky explained, that never again could he paint these paintings, nor express himself equally spontaneously and as deeply emotional. That therefore these lyrical paintings were unique in their intensity and directness of self expression. The "White Edge," though partially abstracted from a "troika motive" and somewhat inspired by "intellectual reminiscence about summer impressions," derives its importance from those parts of non-objective inventiveness, which bring to its rhythmic form and color element a powerful triumph, beyond all intellectual, unpictorial handicap from abstraction.

The possibility of a complete solution in any creative organization of painting, depends on the consequent development of the artistic problem; intuitively conceived, and ordered cosmically with an intelligence, freed of any tie from the intellectual unpictorial dictum.

The purity of a given space on a canvas, or on a paper demands from the artist the upholding of this purity. And a strict devotion to the imperative lawful consequent development, which is in accordance with the first statement of form and color on the virgin canvas. That the beauty of this given space can be ruined by inorganic intellectual abstraction of an objective or subjective inspiration, or intelligently and reverently enriched with creative invention, makes the difference between the intellectual earthly conceived abstraction and the intelligent, spiritually conceived non-objective creation. A

simple fact, which has not yet dawned upon the many, who are intellectually handicapped but write on Art. Yet this realization has imposed its essential truth on the creative artist's consciousness. It involves a severe obligation for reverent devotion to the law of a sublime and prophetic task.

One of the reasons for the historic importance of the "White Edge" is, that during the creation of this painting, Kandinsky evolved to the realization of this task and its possibility. And so he overcame the objective handicap, eliminating it with the powerful rhythm he created in the construction of this painting, which is due to its magnificent design and the masterful use of white and black, as a color element. Also the contrast of the rhythmic counterplay in the red motive, circling its own melody around a green center motive, and the blue color theme which is so soundly organized into its own lawful rhythm, that it seems to hold the entire composition together. All this enchantingly embraced by a yellow counter motive which, like a melody of infinite joyousness, seems to satisfy itself with its expressive rhythm, while surrounding organically the entire composition. Almost like the tone of a clarinet, pursuing its flow of delightful rhythmic harmony, which cheers the organization of a symphony, to contrast the soft intensity of the contrabass or cello's solemn andante. The law of counterpoint in musical sound creation has its counterpart in just as many lawful problems of form and color composition in non-objective painting. To which law the layman need not pay any attention. His reaction should be the faculty to enjoy the result of beauty and harmony, as anyone can enjoy the heavenly blue of the enchanting morning glory, swaying rhythmically in the wind, without questioning its creation.



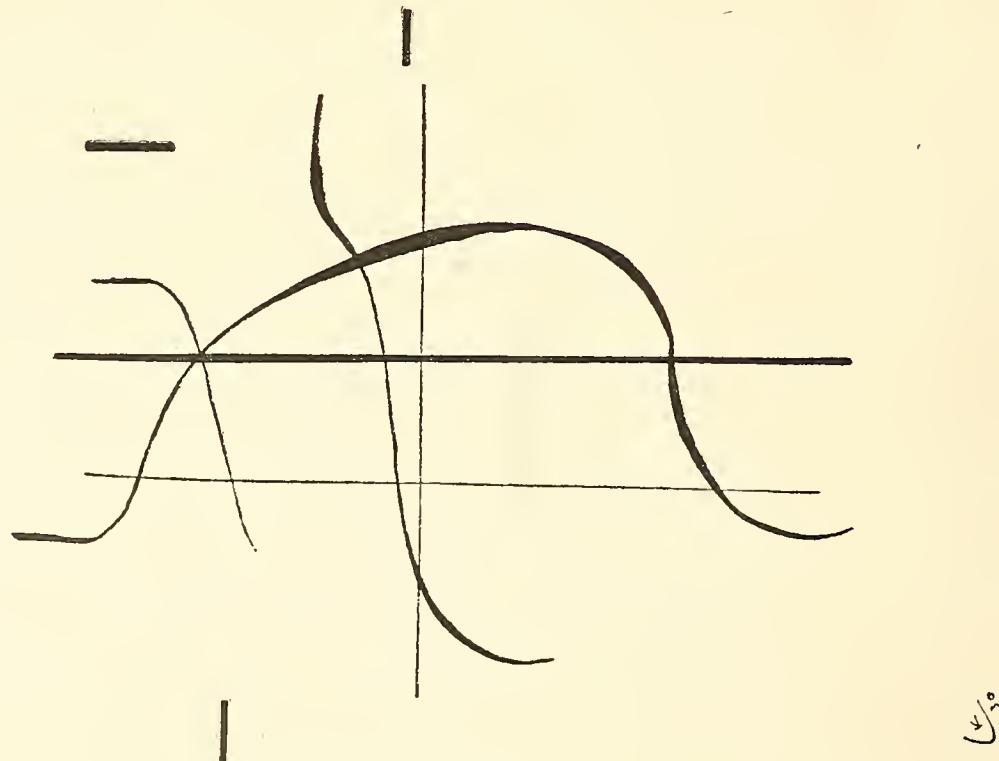
ON COMPOSITION NO. 8

Painted in 1923, ten years after the "White Edge," the "Composition No. 8" which in 1932 Kandinsky called his most important painting, shows clearly his development to greater clarification of space and form precision. Also, indicating the use of a light background, which since 1919 has made possible to a great extent the expression of the rhythmic form ideal of our time. In so creating the need for a visionary or rather spiritual dimension, which must be felt to be realized, and which induces the onlooker to follow this visionary rhythm from form to form, and to realize the dimension of a line to harmonize with the balance of space surrounding it. Also to feel the perfection of the rhythmic in-between, which magically binds the entire creation to a unit of endless vibrations for aesthetic enjoyment. It can be seen from many angles, unlimited approaches and with infinite possibilities of reaction. While the quiet influence of non-objective paintings develops such reactions finally in all those exposed to its growing influence. Due to this influence, a non-objective painting is a most essential, useful, practical creation for the advance of mankind. In "Composition No. 8" the softly rounded lyrical line motives are counter-played by the dramatic straight lines and triangles, while the circle motives enfold themselves as contrasting centers in the vast unit. Here Kandinsky already approaches what later he solved to perfection in the paintings of 1935 "Pointed and Round" and of 1936 "Rigid and Bent" (reproduced on pages 34 and 41). It is the excluding of the outside space, beyond the frame, still so evident in the "White Edge." Yet there the intense centrifugal force seems to rather draw the outside into the inside of the painting's space and to induce it definitely into its rhythmic content. In "Composition No. 8" the master achieved already partly

a powerful feeling of largeness of space by almost entirely staying inside the frame.

To avoid eccentric continuity and yet not create a boring decoration or dull pattern, as most bring about, who lack the ability to create the spirituality of rhythm, is what provides the answer, whether such a painting is Art or decoration. Only a concentric creation can bring such spiritual rhythm in between its form variations.

Kandinsky's "Composition No. 8," painted in 1923, belongs to the so-called "cold period," about which Kandinsky wrote in 1936 to Hilla Rebay: "Most of the paintings of this so-called 'cold period' which at first were so violently attacked, are now already sold, and so I have practically nothing left of it." In 1938 Kandinsky stated that to call such a creative painting an "abstraction" was wrong, but that unfortunately this erroneous term was now introduced. To this Hilla Rebay replied, "It can be changed." As the word was the beginning of creation, it should be respected for its meaning. How can absolute forms become abstracted? Kandinsky also said and wrote, that he had used the word "non-objective" already in 1910, in his first autobiography, and that the denial in the word "non-objective" is needed at a time, when people are trained to detect objects as an essential part of Art; they therefore wish to look for title and subject, before even seeing a painting as such. Yet the denial in the word "NON" informs the onlooker at once not to search for any earthly representation. This intellectual reaction is clearly forestalled by the "NON," while only those people are attracted whose artistic souls search for art itself. In time to come this "NON" will not be necessary, and these paintings can be simply called creative paintings which they are.





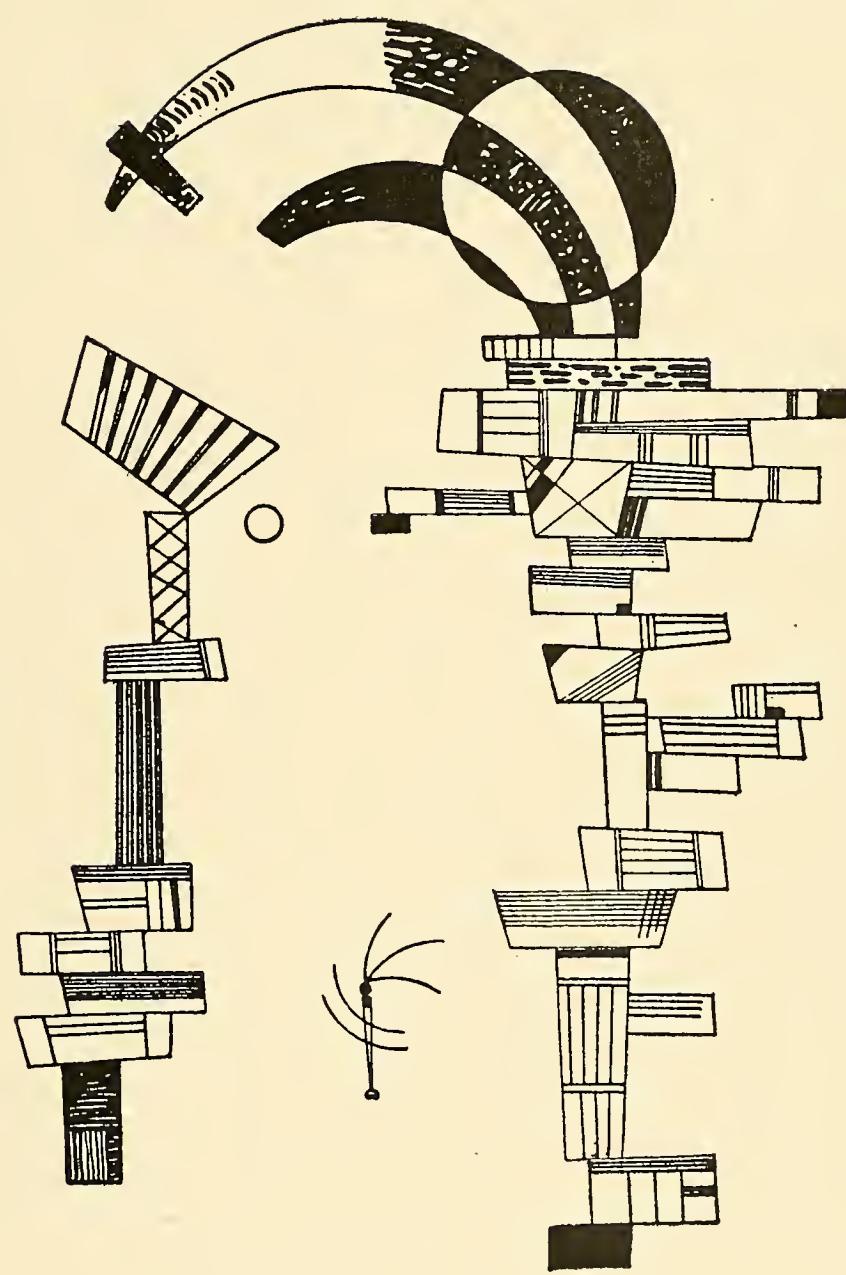
From 1914 to 1921 Kandinsky lived in Russia. Most of the paintings from this epoch belong to the Russian State and are not available at this time.

His autobiography written in 1910, and which follows, appeared in a German edition by Herwarth Walden, in 1913.

In 1918 while Kandinsky was in Moscow, the Department of Pictorial Art of the Peoples Commissariat of Education published a revised edition of it which also contained an addition by Kandinsky; and which he called "Text Artista."

This Autobiography as well as the Culture Plan of 1920 (Schematic Plan of Studies and Work of the Institute of Art Culture) were both recently translated from the Russian and are also published by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, upon the occasion of the Kandinsky Memorial Exhibition from March 15th to May 15th, 1945 in the Museum of Non-objective Paintings.

Located at 24 East 54th Street, it houses the collection of the Foundation temporarily, until Frank Lloyd Wright has erected the permanent Gallery on Fifth Avenue and 89th Street after plans just finished, and which is to be built soon after the war.



15



Photograph taken by Hilla Rebay of her parents, showing the inn in Rothenburg, where Kandinsky painted and which he describes in his biography.

RETROSPECTS BY WASSILY KANDINSKY

The first colors that made a strong impression on me were light, juicy green, white, crimson red, black and yellow ochre. These memories go back to the third year of my life. I saw these colors on various objects which are not as clear in my mind today as the colors themselves.

Like all children, I passionately loved to "ride horse-back." For this purpose, our driver cut spiral stripes into thin rods, removing both rinds from the first spiral cut and only the top rind from the second, so that my horse generally consisted of three colors; the brownish yellow of the outer rind (which I did not like and which I would have liked to replace by another), the juicy green of the second layer of the rind (which I particularly liked and which, even when acquiring a withered look, still had something fascinating for me) and finally the ivory-colored wood of the stick itself (which had a happy smell that made me want to lick it; but soon it withered, which from the very start spoiled my pleasure in this white).

It seems to me that shortly before my parents went to Italy (where I, as a three-year-old, and my nurse were taken along), my grandparents moved into a new apartment. I have the impression that this apartment was still completely empty, that is neither furniture nor people were in it. In a room that was not large, there was only a clock on the wall. I stood in front of it, all alone, and enjoyed the white of the dial and the crimson red of the rose painted on it.

My nurse, who hailed from Moscow, was very much surprised that my parents were making such a long trip, just to admire "broken down buildings and old stones": "We have enough of these in Moscow." Of all these "stones" in Rome I only remember an unsurmountable forest of thick pillars, this terrible forest of the St. Peter's Cathedral from which, it appears to me, my nurse and I could find no way out for a long time. And then Italy is colored into two black impressions. I drive with my mother in a black coach over a bridge (water below — I believe dirty yellow): I was brought into a kindergarten in Florence. And another black — steps into black water, on it a terrible, black, long boat with a black box in the center: we go on a gondola at night. Here too I develop a gift which makes me famous "all over Italy," as I cry from the bottom of my heart.

It was a piebald horse (yellow ochre body and light yellow mane) in a game of horse race, which I and my aunt* liked particularly. Here a strict routine was ob-

served: once I was allowed to have this horse under my jockeys, and once my aunt. My love for such horses has not left me to this day. It is a pleasure to me to see such a horse in the streets of Munich; it appears every summer when the streets are sprinkled. It arouses the sun living within me. It is immortal because it has not become older in the fifteen years I have known it. It was one of my first impressions when I moved to Munich before this time — and the strongest. I stopped and followed it with my eyes for a long time. And a half unconscious, but happy promise, touched my heart. It aroused the little lead horse that was living within me and connected Munich with the years of my childhood. This piebald horse, suddenly made me feel at home in Munich. As a child I talked much German (my grandmother, from my mother's side, came from the Baltic). The German fairy tales which I had so often heard as a child, began to take life. The high, narrow roofs of the Promenaden Platz and the Maximilian Platz, which have disappeared in the meantime, the old Schwabing, and particularly the meadow which I once discovered by chance, transformed these fairy tales into reality. The blue tramway passed through the streets, like the air in a fairy tale, taking on life, making breathing light and happy. The yellow letter boxes at the corners sang their songs like canary birds. I welcomed the inscription "Kunst-muehle" and felt that I was in a city of arts, which to me was the same as fairytown. These impressions were the basis of the mediaeval paintings which I made later. Following good advice, I visited Rothenburg ob der Tauber. I will never forget the constant changing from the express to the local and from the local to the trolley with the grass covered rails, the thin whistle of the long-necked locomotive, the clatter and whining of the tired rails, and with the old peasant, with large silver buttons, who insisted on talking to me about Paris, and whom I could hardly understand myself. It was an unreal trip. I felt as though, counteracting all laws of nature, a magic power was drawing me into the past, from one country to the other. I leave the small (unreal) station and passing over a meadow, I enter the gate. Gates, ditches, narrow houses which hold their heads together down the entire lane, and look each other deep into the eye, the giant door of the inn, leading direct into the dark, mighty dining room, from the center of which heavy, wide dark, oak stairs lead to the rooms, and the sea of bright red roofs which I see through the narrow window. It was rainy all the time. High, round rain drops sat on my palette, teasingly reached out their hands to each

* Elisabeth Tichejeff, who had a great, unforgettable influence on my life and my entire development. She was my mother's eldest sister and played a great part in my education. However, also many other people, with whom she came in contact do not forget her enlightened spiritual being.

other from afar, shivered and shook, suddenly and unexpectedly they united, forming thin, clever cords, running quickly and gaily among the colors, slipping into my sleeves here and there. I do not know where these studies have gone. They have disappeared. Just one picture remained of this trip. That is "the old village" which, however, I only painted after my return to Munich from memory. It is sunny and I made the roofs as bright a red as I could at the time.

In this painting too I really was chasing after a certain hour which always remained and will remain the nicest hour of the Moscow days. The sun is already low and has reached its greatest power, for which it was searching all day long, to which it aspired the entire day. This picture does not last long: but a few more minutes and the light of the sun becomes reddish from effort, redder and redder, first cold and then warmer and warmer. The sun melts all of Moscow into one spot which, like a mad tuba vibrates the spirit—the entire soul. No, this red unity is not the nicest hour! That is only the last note of the symphony which brings every color to highest life, which lets all of Moscow ring like the fff of a giant orchestra and forces it to join in. Pink, lavender, yellow, white, blue, pistachio green, crimson red houses, churches—each a separate song—the raving green grass, the deeper murmuring trees, or the snow, singing with a thousand voices, or the allegretto of the branches, stripped of their leaves, the red, stiff, silent ring of the Kremlin wall and above that, towering, everything like a note of triumph, like an all-forgetting Hallelujah the white long, delicately earnest line of the Ivan Weliky Bell Tower. And on its high, stretched neck, striving upwards in constant search of the heavens, is the golden head of the cupola, shining between the golden and colored stars of the other Moscow cupolas.

To paint this hour, I thought, would be the most impossible and highest joy of an artist.

These impressions repeated themselves every sunny day. They were a pleasure which touched me to the bottom of my soul, rising to ecstasy. And at the same time, they were a torture, because I felt that art as a whole, and particularly my powers as compared to nature, were far too weak elements. Many years had to pass before I came to the simple solution, through feeling and thinking, that the aims (thus also the means) of nature and art are essentially, organically, by the laws of science, different from each other—and that they are equally large and equally strong. This solu-

tion which today guides my work, which is so plain and simply natural, destroys the unnecessary torture of the unnecessary task which deep inside of me I had set for myself, though it could not be fulfilled. It did away with this torture, and the pleasure in nature and art thus rose to untroubled heights. Since that time I have been able to enjoy these two world elements to their full. A joy, paired with the stirring feeling of thankfulness.

This solution released me and opened new worlds to me. Everything "dead" vibrated. Not only the stars, moon, woods and trees serenaded by the poets, but also a stump lying in an ash tray, a patient white trouser button looking up from a puddle in the street, a willing piece of bark trailed through the grass by an ant's strong teeth to a certain place and for a certain purpose, a calendar sheet, towards which the well-known hand is extended, to forcefully tear it from the warm companionship of the other sheets remaining on the pad—everything shows me its face, its inner being, the secret soul, which remains silent more often than it speaks. Thus every quiet and every moving point or line became just as alive and opened up its soul to me. That was sufficient for me to "grasp" with all my being and all my senses the possibility and the existence of that art which today in contrast to "objectivity" is called "non-objectivity."

But at the time when I was attending college and could use only my free time for painting, I searched, in spite of an apparent impossibility, for a "color chorus" (as I called it) which I could retain on canvas and which had come to me directly from nature, stirringly forcing itself onto my very soul. I made desperate efforts to express the full power of this resounding—and in vain.

At the same time my soul was constantly kept vibrating by other, purely human emotions, so that I knew no quiet hour. It was the time of the creation of an all student organization which was to embrace the students not only of one university, but of all Russian universities, and in the end also the Western European universities. The struggle of the students against the sly and unveiled University Law of 1885 continued constantly. "Unrests," violations of the old liberal Moscow traditions, the destruction by the officials of organizations already in existence, our new organizations, the subterranean thunder of the political movements, the development of the initiative* of the students, created constant new occurrences and thus made the soul sensitive, receptive and particularly susceptive to vibrations.

*This own initiative is one of the happy, though much too little cultivated sides of a life pressed into rigid form. Every individual (cooperative or personal) step brings results, because it shakes the rigidness of the state of life—irrespective of whether it shows "practical" results or not. It forms the atmosphere of criticism of common occurrences which, through dull habit continue to harden the soul and make it immovable. This is the reason for the dullness of the masses, about which freer spirits, always have reason to complain bitterly. It was the intention to create the cooperative organizations in such a way, that their statutes were as loose as possible, so that they would be more inclined to adjust themselves to anything new and not keep to precedence as much as was formerly the case. Every organization is to be considered merely as a stepping stone to freedom, as a band which is still needed, but which is to be as loose as possible and does not hinder the great strides to further development.

Luckily, politics did not completely embrace me. The necessary power of absorption into the fine material, called the "abstract," was practiced by me through various forms of study. Besides the special field chosen by me (economics which I studied under the guidance of Prof. A. J. Tschuproff, the greatly gifted scientist, and one of the most singular people that I met in my life) other sciences powerfully attracted me, partly simultaneously, partly individually; Roman law (which enchanted me through its fine, conscious, highly refined "construction," but which finally could not satisfy me, the Slav, due to its cold, much too reasonable, unbending logic), criminal law (which particularly interested me, and perhaps too much so, due to the then new theory of Lombroso), the history of Russian law and the law of the peasant (which in contrast to Roman law won my great admiration and love as a release and happy solution of the fundamental law*), the knowledge of ethnology, touching upon this study (which in the beginning I thought would bring me to the soul of the people). All these helped me to think in an abstract manner.

All these sciences I loved, and to this day thankfully remember the hours of enthusiasm, and perhaps inspiration, which they gave me. However, these hours faded upon my first contact with art, which alone had the power of relieving me of the feeling of time and space. The scientific work had never given me such experiences, inner tension, creative moments.

Although, I found my powers too weak to feel justified to dispense with my other duties and, as it appeared to me at the time, to lead the unlimitedly happy life of an artist. Besides, at that time, Russian life was particularly morose, my scientific works were appreciated, and I decided to become a scientist. In economics, (the subject chosen by me) I liked, besides the returns, only the pure abstract form of thinking. Banking, the practical side of money matters were to me utterly repulsive. However, there was nothing left to me but to also take this part into the bargain.

At the same time I experienced two things which placed a stamp on my entire life and which at that time stirred me to the bottom of my soul. They were the French Impressionistic exhibition in Moscow — particularly the "hay stack" by Claude Monet — and a Wagner presentation at the Hof Theater — Lohengrin.

* After the "emancipation" of the peasants in Russia, the government gave them an economic self-administration which, unexpected to most, awakened the political instinct of the peasant and made him politically mature; also their own court where, up to certain limits, judges chosen by the peasants settled disputes and were allowed to punish criminal acts. And here the people found the human principle, to punish small offenses severely, and severe offenses lightly, or not at all. The peasant's expression for this is: "According to the man." That is there was no rigid law made (for example, as in the Roman law — particularly *jus strictum!*) but a very flexible and liberal form, which was not decided by appearance but solely by the spirit.

** The "Light and Air Problem" of the impressionists interested me very little. I always found that intellectual conversations over this problem, have very little to do with painting. The theory of the Neo Impressionist, which in the end talked about the effect of color and left air alone, appeared much more important to me. In spite of that I first felt dully, and later consciously, that every theory which is based on exterior means, represents only an individual case, at the side of which many other cases can exist by the same right; still later I realized that the exterior grows from the inside, or is born dead.

Before that I knew realistic art only, really exclusively Russian, often stood for a long time in front of Franz Liszt's hand on his portrait by Repin, and the like. And suddenly, for the first time, I saw a painting. The catalogue explained to me that it was a hay stack. I could not recognize it. I felt embarrassed at this lack of recognition. I also felt that the painter had no right to paint so indistinctly. I had a dull feeling that the object was missing in this painting. And I noticed with surprise and consternation that the picture does not only draw you, but indelibly impresses itself upon your brain and unexpectedly, to its minutest detail, constantly floats before your mind's eye. All this was unclear to me, and I could not draw the simple consequences of this experience. The thing, however, that was completely clear — was the unexpected power of the palette, until now unknown to me, which surpassed all my dreams. Painting acquired a fairytale-like power and beauty. Unconsciously, however, the object as the unavoidable element of a painting, was discredited. All in all I had the impression that a small part of my fairy-tale Moscow already existed on canvas.**

Lohengrin, however, appeared to me a full realization of this Moscow. The violins, the deep notes of the contrabass, and particularly the wind instruments, to me embodied the full power of the hour of dusk. In spirit I saw all my colors — they stood in front of my mind's eye. Wild, almost mad lines, appeared before me. I did not dare use the expression that Wagner had musically drawn "my hour." It became quite clear to me, however, that art in general is much more powerful than appeared to me and that on the other hand, painting could develop the same powers that music possessed. And the impossibility of myself discovering these powers or at least finding them, embittered my renunciation even more.

However, I was never, never strong enough to carry out my duties in the face of everything, and I succumb to the temptation that was only too great for me.

A scientific event, cleared one of the most important impediments on this road. That was the further division of the atom. The destruction of the atom to my soul was equal to the destruction of the world. Suddenly the heaviest walls broke down. Everything became uncertain, tottering and soft. I would not have been surprised, if a stone had dissolved in the air in front of me and

became invisible. Science seemed to me to have been destroyed; its most important basis was but an illusion, an error of the scientists, who did not build their celestial structures in enlightened light, with a steady hand, stone by stone, but were rather feeling for truth, unguided in the dark, and blindly misinterpreted one item as another.

As a child already I knew the tormenting, happy hours of inner tension, promising to take on an incarnate form. These hours of inner trembling, unclear longing, calling for something we cannot understand, exercising pressure on the heart during the day, filling the soul with unrest, and during the night causing us to live through fantastic dreams, full of horrors and joys. Like many children and adolescents, I tried to write poems, which I tore up sooner or later. I can remember that drawing killed this condition, that is, it allowed me to live outside of time and space, so that also I did not feel myself anymore. My father* at an early age discovered my love for drawing and allowed me to take drawing lessons, when I was still in high school.

I remember, how I loved the material itself, how the colors and crayons were particularly attractive, beautiful and alive to me. I derived lessons from the mistakes I made, almost all of which still affect me with their original power. As a very small child I used water color for a piebald horse; everything was finished, except the hoofs. My aunt, who helped me paint had to leave, and suggested, that I wait with the hoofs until she returned. I remained alone in front of the unfinished picture and tormented myself with the impossibility of putting the last bits of color on the paper. This last piece of work seemed so simple to me. I thought, that if I would make the hoofs real black, they would surely be absolutely true to nature. I put as much black on the brush as I could. One moment — and I saw four black, disgusting, ugly spots, utterly foreign to the paper, on the horse's feet. I felt desperate and horribly punished! Later I well understood the Impressionists' fear of black and still later it cost me actual spiritual fear to put pure black on a canvas. Such a child's misfortune casts a long, long shadow on many years of its later life.

Further great impressions which I gathered during my years at college and which again affected me for many

* With unusual patience my father, during my entire life, allowed me to follow my dreams and whims. When I was ten years old he tried to have me assist him in making a choice of schools for me, between Real Gymnasium and the Latin Gymnasium; by describing the differences between the two schools, he helped me to make my choice as independently as possible. For many years he liberally assisted me financially. When my life changed, he spoke to me as an older friend and never exercised the least bit of force upon me in important matters. His principles of education were full confidence and friendly relations with me. He knows how thankful I am to him. These lines should be a guide to parents who often try to forcefully push their children (particularly those gifted artistically) from their proper walk of life and thereby make them unhappy.

**A simple case of the application of time.

*** During this time I acquired the habit of noting down individual thoughts. Thus was born "On the Spiritual in Art," unconscious to me. The notes piled up during a period of ten years at least. One of my first notes on the beauty of color in a painting, is the following: "The splendor of color in a painting must strongly draw the observer towards it, and at the same time it must hide the deep rooted essence." I meant the essence of painting, but not as yet in pure form (as I see it now), but the feeling, or the feelings of the artist, which he expresses in painting. At that time I still labored under the delusion that the observer faces the painting with an open soul and tries to hear a language known to him. There are such observers (that is no delusion), only they are just as rare as gold dust in the sand. There are even some observers who, although they have no personal relation to the language of the painting, will face it and allow it to take a hold of them. I have met such people during my life.

years, were the Rembrandts in St. Petersburg's Hermitage and the trip to the Government District of Wologda, where I was sent as ethnologist and jurist by the Imperial Institute for natural history, anthropology and ethnography. I had a double duty: To study the peasants' criminal law among the Russian people (to find out the principles of primitive law) and to collect from the fisher and hunter tribes of the gradually disappearing Syrians, the remnants of their heathen religion.

Rembrandt deeply moved me. The great division of Light and Dark, the blending of the secondary tones into the larger parts, the amalgamation and consolidation of these tones into these parts, which give a great double effect at any distance, immediately reminded me of Wagner's trumpets, opening to me entirely new possibilities, super-human effect of the color itself and particularly the intensifying of the power by means of constellation, that is contrasts. I saw that every large space in itself contained nothing mystic, that each of these surfaces immediately betrayed its derivation from the palette, but that this space actually achieved a mystic power through the other space opposing it, so that at first impression its derivation from the palette appeared doubtful. However, it was not within my nature to immediately apply a means observed. Unconsciously I approached the strange pictures as I now approach "nature"; I greeted them with respect and deep joy, but felt that this was a power still strange to me. However, on the other hand I felt rather unconsciously that this great division of Rembrandt's gave his pictures a quality which to that date I had never seen. I felt that his pictures "lasted long" and explained this to myself as being due to the fact that first I had to constantly explore one part, and then the other. Later I understood that this partition or division magically produces an element which originally appeared strange and inaccessible to painting — time**.

The paintings which I painted in Munich ten to twelve years ago, were to receive this quality. I only made three or four such paintings, during the course of which I wanted to put an "endless" number of at first hidden color tones into every part. They first had to appear completely hidden***, particularly in the dark, and only as time went on, show themselves to the carefully watch-

ing observer, first unclear and testingly, growing more and more, with increasing "unearthly" power.

To my great surprise I found that I was working along Rembrandt's principle. That was an hour of bitter disappointment and gnawing doubt as to my own powers, the doubt of a possibility of finding my own means of expression. Soon it also appeared "too cheap" to me to incarnate the element I loved most at that time, in such a manner — the hiding, the time and the weird unearthly.

At that time I worked particularly hard, often until late at night, when I was interrupted in my work by complete exhaustion and had to go to bed quickly. Days during which I had not worked (seldom as they were!), I considered lost and tormented myself because of them. When the weather was even fairly good, I painted one or two hours every day, particularly in the old Schwabing which at that time gradually developed into a part of Munich. During the time of my disappointment in the studio work and when I was painting from memory, I particularly painted a lot of landscapes which, however, did not give me much satisfaction, so that later on I only made paintings of a very few of them. I did not consider the feeling of travelling with a paint box, with the sensation of a hunter in my heart, as responsible, as the painting of pictures in which at that time I already semi-consciously, semi-unconsciously searched for the composition. The word composition moved me spiritually, and I made it my later aim in life to paint a "composition". The word itself affected me like a prayer. It filled me with awe. When painting sketches, I let myself go. I thought little of houses and trees, with my spatula I cut colored stripes and spots on the canvas and let them sing as loud as I could. In me the hour before dusk in Moscow resounded, in my eyes was the strong, colorful scale of the Munich light atmosphere, thundering in its shadows. Later, particularly at home, always deep disappointment. My colors appeared too weak to me, too flat; the entire study — a resultless effort to catch the power of nature. How queer it was for me to hear that I was exaggerating the colors of nature, that this exaggeration makes my paintings incomprehensible and that my only salvation would be to learn to "break colors." The Munich critics (who partly, particularly at first, were very favorable towards me*), tried to explain the "splendor of my colors" as due to Byzantic influence.

The Russian critics (who almost without exception attacked me with unparliamentary expressions) found that I was deteriorating under the influence of Munich Art. At that time I saw for the first time how wrong, uninformed and unrestrained most critics go to work. That

explains the cold-bloodedness with which intelligent artists accept the worst articles about themselves.

The inclination to "hide," to be hidden, saved me from the detrimental side of folk art which I saw for the first time in my travels in the Government District of Wologda, on its true soil and in its original form. First I took the train with a feeling that I was travelling to another planet, then I travelled by boat for a few days along the quiet and self-absorbed River Suchona; then in a primitive coach through endless forests, between colored hills, via swamps and sand deserts. I travelled all alone, which was favorable to absorbing myself in the surroundings and myself. During the day there was often a scorching heat, and during the night a freezing cold. I often think with thankfulness of my drivers who constantly wrapped me warmer into my travelling rug, which slid down repeatedly, due to the shaking and jumping of the coach, which had no springs. I came to villages where the entire population was suddenly clad in grey, from top to bottom, and who had yellowish-greenish hair and faces, or whose costumes showed a multiple of colors, making them appear like colored, living pictures running around on two legs. I shall never forget the large houses, covered with wood cuts. In these wonder houses I experienced something that has not repeated itself since. It taught me to move into the picture, to live in the picture. I still remember how I stepped into the room the first time and instantly stopped, overcome by the unexpected picture. The table, the benches, the large oven, so important in a Russian peasant house, the closets and every article were painted with colored, large ornaments. Folk art on all the walls; a hero, representing a symbol, a battle, a painted folk song. The "red" corner ("red" is ancient Russian and means the same as "beautiful") completely and closely covered with painted and printed pictures of saints; in front of this, a small red hanging lamp, which burned and flourished like a knowing, discreetly low talking, modest, far and in itself living proud star. When finally I entered the room, I felt myself surrounded on all sides by the painting, into which I had thus penetrated. The same feeling was dormant in me up to that time, unconsciously, when I was in the churches in Moscow, and particularly in the main dome of the Kremlin. During my next visit to these churches, after my return from this trip, the same feeling within me became fully clear and alive. Later I often had the same experience in the Bavarian and Tyrolean Chapels. Of course, every time the impression was colored entirely different, because completely different parts formed this impression: Church! Russian Church! Chapel! Catholic Chapel!

* Even today my critics can see talent in my older paintings, which is a proof of their weakness. In later ones, and the latest, they find confusion, a dead end road, a decline and often deceit which is a good proof of the constantly increasing power of these paintings. Of course, here I do not speak of the Munich critics alone: for them — with few exceptions — my books are malicious bungling. It would be too bad, if this judgment were different.

I did much sketching of these tables and various ornaments. They were never paltry and were painted so strongly that the object dissolved within them. This impression, too, became clear to me only much later.

Probably for no other reason than through these impressions, my further wishes took shape within me, objectives of my own power. I have for many years looked for the means of letting the observer "walk" into the painting, to force him to the self-erasing dissolution with and within the picture.

Sometimes I even succeeded: I saw it in the observer. From the unconsciously intended effect of painting on the painted object, which can dissolve itself through such painting, I further developed my ability of overlooking the object also within the painting. Much later, when I was already in Munich, I was enchanted by an unexpected view in my studio.

It was the hour of approaching dusk. I returned home with my paint box after making a study, still dreaming and wrapped into the work completed, when suddenly I saw an indescribably beautiful picture, imbibed by an inner glow. First I hesitated, then I quickly approached this mysterious picture, on which I saw nothing but shapes and colors, and the contents of which I could not understand. I immediately found the key to the puzzle: it was a picture painted by me, leaning against the wall, standing on its side. The next day, when there was daylight, I tried to get yesterday's impression of the painting. However, I only succeeded half-ways: on its side too, I constantly recognized the objects and the fine finish of dusk was lacking. I now knew fully well, that the object harms my paintings.

A frightening abyss, a responsible load of all kinds of questions confronted me. And the most important: what should replace the missing object? The danger of ornamentation stood clearly before me, the dead make-believe existence of schematical forms could only repulse me.

Only after many years of patient working, strenuous thinking, numerous careful attempts, constantly developing ability to purely and non-objectively feel artistic forms, to concentrate deeper and deeper into this endless depth, I arrived at the artistic forms, with which I am now working, at which I am now working and which, I hope, will develop much further.

It took very long before the question "What should replace the object?" received a proper reply from within me. Often I look back into my past and am desolate to think how much time I have lost in answering this question. I have only one consolation: I could never get myself to use a form which was created within me through the application of logic—not purely feeling. I could not think up forms and I am repulsed when I see such forms. All forms that I ever used came "of their own accord," they appeared in finished form before my eyes, and it was only up to me to copy them, or

they already shaped themselves, while I was working, often surprising me. As the years went by, I have learned to somewhat control this ability of shaping. I have trained myself not to just let myself go, but to check and guide the force working within me. As the years went by I learned to understand that working with a quickly beating heart, with pressure on the chest (and thus later aching ribs) and tension of the entire body, cannot suffice. It can, however, only exhaust the artist, not his task. The horse carries the rider with strength and speed. But the rider leads the horse. Talent brings the artist to great heights with power and speed.

The artist, however, guides his talent. That is the element of the "conscious," the "calculating" in his work, or what else you wish to call it. The artist must know his talent through and through and, like a smart businessman, not let the smallest part rest unused and forgotten. He must rather utilize, develop every single piece up to the maximum possibility existing for him. This training, development of talent, requires great ability to concentrate, which on the other hand tends to diminish other abilities. I observed this clearly on myself. I never had a so-called good memory: I was particularly always unable to memorize numbers, names and even poems. The tables of multiplication always offered me unsurmountable difficulties, which I have not overcome to this date and which got my teachers desperate. From the very start I had to utilize the optical memory. Then it went better. In the state examination in statistics I quoted an entire page of figures only because in the excitement I saw this page in front of me. Thus, already as a boy, I was able to, at home, paint by heart paintings, which had particularly fascinated me in exhibits, as far as my technical abilities permitted. Later I often painted a landscape better "by heart" than from nature. Thus I painted "The Old Village" and later made many colored Dutch and Arabian drawings. Thus, in a long street I could name all stores, without making a mistake, because I saw them in front of me. Fully unconsciously I constantly saturated myself with impressions and at times so intensively and so incessantly, that I felt how my chest was cramped and breathing became heavy. I became so overtired, overstuffed, that I often thought with envy of clerks, who could rest completely after their work. I longed for dull quiet, for eyes, which Boecklin called "porter's eyes." However, I had to see constantly.

A few years ago I suddenly noticed that this ability had decreased. First I was very much frightened, but later I understood that the powers which enabled constant observation had been guided along other roads, due to my improved ability to concentrate, and that they fulfilled other purposes, much more important to me now. My ability to absorb myself with the inner life of art (and thus also my soul) increased so intently, that I often passed outside objects without noticing them, something that could not have happened before.

As far as I understand, I did not mechanically force myself to this ability — it always lived organically within me, but in embryonic form.

As a thirteen or fourteen year old boy I bought a paint box with oil colors with money I had slowly saved up. The feeling I had at that time — or better: the experience of the color coming out of the tube, is with me to this day. One pressure of the fingers and cheering, solemn, meditating, dreaming, wrapped up in themselves, with deep seriousness, with bubbling roguishness, with a sigh of relief, with the deep sound of sorrow, with obstinate — power and resistance, with resilient softness and devotion, with tenacious self-control, with pathetic unstableness of balance, one after the other of these unique beings that we call colors, appeared — each alive within itself, independent, equipped with all kinds of qualities for further independent life. And willing at any moment, to submit to new combinations, to mix among themselves and create endless rows of new worlds. Some lied there as already exhausted, weakened, hardened, dead forces, living reminders of past possibilities, not decreed by fate. As in strife, as in battle fresh forces appear from the tube, replacing the old ones. In the center of the palette there is a unique world of remnants of colors already used, wandering far from this source to build the necessary creations on canvas. Here is a world which arose from the will, to create the pictures already painted and by coincidence, the obscure game with forces unknown to the artist. And I owe much to these coincidences: they have taught me more than any teacher or master. I studied them often with love and admiration. The palette, (consisting of the elements mentioned and which in itself is a "creation," often more beautiful than any masterpiece), be praised for the pleasures which it grants. Often it appeared to me that the brush which with unbending will power tore pieces from this living color creation, brought forth musical notes as it tore away the pieces. Sometimes I heard a hissing of the mixing colors. It was like an adventure that you could hear, in the secret kitchen of the mysterious alchemist.

Later I heard that a very famous artist had said (I do not remember who it was) "In painting one look at the canvas, half a look at the palette and ten at the model." It sounded very nice, but I soon found that in my case it would have to be the other way around: Ten looks at the canvas, one at the palette, half a look at nature. Thus I learned to fight with the canvas, to learn to know it as a creature resisting my wish (dream) and to forcefully submit it to my wish. First it stands there like a pure, chaste virgin with clear eye and with heavenly joy — this pure canvas which itself is as beau-

tiful as a painting. And then comes the wishful brush conquering it here and there and finally with all its energy, like a European colonist penetrating the wild virgin nature which no one to date has touched, using the axe, spade, hammer and saw to shape her according to his wishes. I gradually learned not to see the obstinate, white tone of the canvas, to notice it only as a matter of seconds (to check myself), instead of seeing in it the tones that are to replace it — thus one thing slowly followed another.

Painting is a thundering collision of different worlds intended to create the new world within and out of their strifes. This new world is the painting. Technically every masterpiece is created as the cosmos was — through catastrophes which in the end create a symphony, a symphony of spheres from the chaotic noise of the instruments. The creation of masterpieces is the creation of worlds.

Thus these feelings of colors on the palette (and also inside the tubes, which resemble humans rich in soul but modest looking, who suddenly in case of need uncover and utilize their powers so far hidden) became spiritual experiences. These experiences became the bases of the ideas which already began to consciously collect themselves within the past ten to twelve years and which lead to the book "On the Spiritual in Art." This book wrote itself more than I wrote it. I wrote down certain experiences which, as I found later, had a certain organic connection. I felt increasingly and constantly clearer that it is not the "formal" that is important to art, but the inner desire (content) which imperatively decides the formal. A step in this direction — which, however, took a disgracefully long time, was the problem of solving the question of art on the basis of inner necessity, which was capable of overthrowing all known rules and barriers at any time.

Thus to me the realm of art constantly departed more and more from the realm of nature, until I could handle both, as two completely different realms. This I accomplished fully only this year.

Here I might touch on a recollection which at the time of its occurrence was a source of pain to me. When I came to Munich from Moscow, with the feeling of a resurrection, the forced labor behind me, the enjoyable labor before me, I soon encountered a limitation to my freedom which, at least for a time, though in a new form, made me a slave — working from a model.

I saw the then very famous school of Anton Azbe* closely crowded. Two or three models "sat for heads" or "stood as nudes." Pupils of both sexes and various nationalities, crowded around these ill smelling, indif-

* Anton Azbe was a gifted artist and a rare and kind person. Many of his numerous students studied with him free of charge. His constant reply to the excuse that someone could not pay, was "Just work diligently!" He apparently had a very unhappy life. You could hear him laugh, but never see it; the corners of his mouth were hardly raised, his eyes always remained sad. I do not know whether anyone knew the secret of his solitary life. And his death was just as solitary as his life; he died all alone in his studio. In spite of his very great income he left only a few thousand Marks. Only after his death it became known how liberal he had been.

ferent, expressionless, generally unprincipled, beings, making 50 to 70 pfennigs per hour; carefully, with a quiet, hissing noise, they covered the paper or canvas and tried to anatomically, constructively and characteristically copy these beings, that did not concern them in the least. By cutting over the lines, they tried to bring out the connection of muscles, by utilization of special technique of space and line, they tried to model the nostril, the lips, to build the entire head along the "principle of the ball" and, as appeared to me, they did not think of art for a moment. The principle of lines in a nude sometimes interested me very much. Sometimes, however, it was repulsive to me. In some positions of certain bodies I felt a repulsive effect of lines and energetically had to force myself to reproduce them. I was almost always fighting myself. Only outside, on the street, I could breathe freely again. Often I succumbed to the temptation, of staying away from school and with my paint box catch the Schwabing, the English Garden or the Isar parks, according to my own conception. Or I stayed at home and tried to paint a picture by heart, from studies or imagination. These paintings did not have too much to do with the laws of nature. Colleagues therefore often thought me lazy or not too gifted, something that sometimes hurt me deeply because I clearly felt within me the love for my work, the diligence and the gift. Finally I isolated myself in these surroundings, felt like a stranger and with all the more intensity absorbed myself in my wishes.

However, I considered it my duty to attend the course in anatomy, something that I did conscientiously — even twice. The second time I heard the temperamental and vivacious course by Prof. Dr. Moillet. I drew the preparations, wrote down the lectures, smelled the air of the corpses. However, I unconsciously felt annoyed when I heard of the direct connection between anatomy and art. It even insulted me — just as I once felt insulted at a correction, that the trunk of a tree "must always be shown as connected to the ground." There was no one there who might have helped me over this feeling, the entanglement in this darkness. It is true, that I never approached anyone with my doubts. I find to this day that such doubts must be solved alone within the soul; otherwise one would desecrate one's own strong solution. However, I soon found, that every head, even though it may appear very "ugly" at the start, is a complete beauty. The natural law of construction, which is manifested so completely and indisputably in every head, gave the head this sign of beauty. I often stood in front of an "ugly" model and said to myself: "How smart." And it is endless wisdom that is portrayed in every detail; every nostril, for example, arouses in me the same feeling of admiration as the flight of a wild duck, the connection of the leaf and the tree, the swimming of the frog — the beak of the pelican, etc., etc. This feeling of admiration for beauty, for wisdom I also received immediately in Prof. Moillet's lectures.

I had a dull feeling that I was sensing secrets of a realm of its own. However, I could not connect this realm with the realm of art. I visited the old Pinakothek and noticed that not a single one of the great masters had achieved the exhaustive beauty and wisdom of the natural model: nature itself remained untouched. It appeared to me at times that it was laughing at these efforts. Much more often, however, it appeared "divine" to me in an abstract sense: it wrought its creation, it went its way to its aims which disappear in the mist, it lived within its realm, and I was strangely outside of it. What is its relation to art?

When some of my colleagues saw the work I had done at home, they termed me a "colorist." Some maliciously called me the "landscape painter." Both hurt me, although I realized the justification of these terms. All the more so! I actually sensed that I felt much more at home in the realm of colors than in that of drawing. I did not know how to help myself in the face of this threatening evil.

At that time Franz Stuck was "the foremost painter in Germany" and I went to him — unfortunately only taking my school work. He found everything pretty badly distorted and suggested that I work for a year in the drawing class at the academy. I failed in the examination, something that only made me angry, but did not discourage me. In this examination drawings were passed which I rightfully considered stupid, untalented and void of any knowledge. After working at home for a year I went to Franz Stuck for the second time — this time only taking along drafts of drawings and paintings which I had not as yet been able to complete; I also took a few studies of landscapes. He accepted me for his painting class and when I asked him about my drawing, I was told that it was expressive. Already when I did my first work at the Academy, Stuck energetically opposed my "extravagance" of colors and suggested that I first draw in black and white, so that I might only study the form. He spoke surprisingly lovingly of art, the play of forms, the blending of forms and gained my full sympathy.

I only wanted to learn drawing from him, because I immediately noticed that he was little receptive to color, and I fully submitted to his advices. In the final analysis I remember this year of working with him, although I sometimes became very angry, with great thankfulness. Stuck always spoke very little and sometimes not very clearly. After the corrections I sometimes had to think a long time over his remarks — but later I almost always found them good. With one single remark he did away with my serious handicap of being unable to finish a painting. He told me that I worked too nervously, that I consume all the interest at the start and spoil the interest by the dry part which comes too late. He said: "I wake up with the idea: today I have a right to do this or that." This "I have a right to do" uncovered before me Stuck's deep love for art and his high respect

for it as well as the secret of serious work. And at home I finished my first painting.

For many more years, however, I was like a monkey in a net: the organic laws of construction wrapped themselves around me in my desires and it was only through great pain, effort and attempts that I was able to overthrow this "wall around art." Thus I finally entered the realm of art, which is a realm of its own, the same as that of nature, science, political life, etc., guided by and through its own laws and which, with the other realms together, in the end form that great realm which we can only dully divine.

Today is the great day of one of the manifestations of this realm. The associations and connections of these individual realms were illumined as by a stroke of lightning: they come forth from the darkness unexpectedly, frightening but as a blessing. Never were they so strongly connected, never so strongly divided. This lightning is the child of the darkening of the spiritual heavens which hung over us black, suffocating and dead. Here the great epoch of the spiritual begins, the manifestations of the soul. Father — Son — and Holy Spirit.

As time went on and only gradually I realized that "truth" in general, and particularly in art is not an X, not an always incompletely recognized but immovable eminence, but that this eminence is movable and is constantly in slow motion. Suddenly it looked to me like a slowly moving snail, that hardly appears to leave its place and leaves a sticky trail behind it, to which near-sighted souls are glued. Here too, I first noticed this important factor in art, and later I also saw in this instance that the same law governs the other realms of life as well. This motion in truth is very complicated: The untrue becomes true, the true becomes untrue, some parts fall off like the shell from a nut; for this reason some mistake the shell for the nut, and bestow on this shell the life of the nut, many fight over the shell and the nut rolls on. A new truth falls as if from the heavens and looks so precise, so stiff and hard, appears so endlessly high that some climb on it, as though they were climbing a long wooden pole, and they are sure that this time they have reached the heavens... until it breaks and the climbers fall, like frogs into a swamp, into the dark unknown. Man is often like a beetle, held by the back; in silent longing he moves his little arms, reaches out for every blade that is reached out to him and constantly believes that this blade is his salvation. During the times of my "unbelief" I asked myself, who is holding me by the back? Whose hand is holding the blade in front of me, and drawing it back again? Or am I lying on my back on the dusty, unconcerned earth and am reaching for the blades that are growing around me of their own accord? How often, however,

did I feel this hand on my back, and then another that pressed itself on my eyes, so that I was in the deep of night while the sun was shining.

Art in many ways resembles religion. This development does not consist of new discoveries which do away with the old truths and call them aberrations (as appears to be the case in science). Its development consists of certain illuminations, resembling lightning, of explosions bursting like fire crackers in the sky and strewing a "bouquet" of numerous luminous stars around them. This illumination shows new perspectives in a bright light, new truths which basically are nothing but the organic development, the organic growing of old wisdom which is not overruled by the new, but continues to live and produce as wisdom and truth. The new branch does not make the trunk of the tree superfluous: it makes the growing of the branch possible. Would the New Testament be possible without the Old? Would our period of the threshold to the "third" manifestation be possible without the second? It is the branching out of the original trunk, in which "everything commences." And the branching out, the further growth and the further complication which often appears confusing and despairing, are the necessary steps to the mighty crown; the steps, which in the final analysis make the tree.

According to his own words, Christ did not come to overthrow the old law. When He spoke: "It was said unto you... and I say unto you..." he brought the old material law as that which had become his spiritual law. In contrast to man at the time of Moses, man had become capable at that time to understand and feel the laws "do not kill," "do not commit adultery," not only in the direct material form, but also the abstract form of the sin of thought, the spiritual sin.

The plain, precise and hard idea, therefore, is not overthrown, but is used as a step to further awakening ideas. And these further, softer and less precise, and less material thoughts, are like further, softer, new branches, which pierce new holes into the air.

On Christ's scale the truth is not placed as an exteriorly rigid fact, but as an inner, flexible one. Here lies the root of the further re-evaluation of values, which uninterruptedly, that is also today, slowly continues to create and at the same time is the root of spirituality which we also gradually achieve in the realm of art. During our time in a strongly revolutionary form. In this way I finally came to the conclusion that I did not consider non-objective painting a cancellation of all former art, but only a vitally important elementary division of the one old trunk into two main branches* from which other branches grow, and which are essential for the formation of the green crown.

* By these two main branches I mean two different ways of handling art. The virtuoso manner (which music has known as a special approach for a long time and which in literature is equal to the art of acting) rests on the more or less personal conception and on the artistic, creative interpretation of "nature."

(over)

From the very beginning I felt this fact more or less clearly and was always annoyed by claims that I was trying to overthrow the old form of painting. In my works I never felt this desire to overthrow: in them I only felt the innerly logical, exteriorly organical, unavoidable continued growth of art. Gradually I realized the former feeling of freedom and thus the unessential demands I made of art, gradually disappeared. They disappeared in favor of only one demand: the demand of inner life in a painting. Here I noticed to my surprise that this demand grew on the basis which Christ set up as a moral qualification basis. I found that this conception of art is Christian and that at the same time it embodies the necessary elements for the receptiveness of the "third" manifestation, the manifestation of the spirit.*

However, I consider it just as logical, that the coloring of the object in painting makes great demands on the inner spiritual life of the purely artistic forms, that is that a development on the part of the observer is absolutely essential, and can under no circumstances be done without. Thus the conditions are created which bring forth a new atmosphere. In this atmosphere, much, much later, pure art will develop which draws us with irresistible attraction in the dreams which today evade us.

As time went on I realized that my slowly further developed (partly conquered) tolerance of other works, did not harm me in any way, that on the contrary it is very favorable to the one-sidedness of my efforts. For this reason I would like to partly limit, partly enlarge on the statement "The artist should be one-sided" and say: "The artist should be one-sided in his work." The ability to experience the works of others (which, of course, happens and must happen in an individual way),

makes the soul more sensitive, more capable of vibration, enriching, widening and refining it and making it more capable of doing its own work. Experiencing and feeling the work of others, in a broad sense is the same as experiencing nature. May and can an artist be deaf and blind? I would say that one approaches his work with even happier spirit and even more quiet glow when one sees that other possibilities (which are innumerable) in art are properly (more or less) utilized. As regards me personally, I love every form which originated from the soul's necessity, was created by the soul. Just as I hate every form that was not born that way. I believe that philosophy in the future besides studying the nature of things, will also study its spirit with great care. Then that atmosphere will be created which will in general give man the ability to feel the spirit of things, to, even though unconsciously, experience this spirit just as today most men unconsciously experience the exterior of things, which explains the public's enjoyment of representational art. This, however, enables men in general to experience the spiritual in the material things and later experience the spiritual in absolute things. And through this new ability, which will be in the sign of the "spirit," the enjoyment of absolute art is developed.

My book "On the Spiritual in Art" and also "The Blue Rider" had for its main objective the awakening of this ability of experiencing the spiritual in the material and in absolute things, an ability which will be absolutely necessary in the future and will make possible endless observations. The desire of arousing this blessed experience in those who were not already enjoying it, was the main object of the two publications.**

(An important example — the portrait.) Nature is here also intended to mean an already existing work, created by someone else: the virtuose masterpiece which grows out of this, belongs to the same class as a picture painted "from nature." As a rule, artists up to now, suppressed the desire of painting such virtuose paintings, something that should be regretted. The so-called copy also belongs in this class: the copyist tries to come as close to the foreign piece of work, as a very careful conductor treats a foreign composition.

The other category is the composition, where the work for the greater part, or exclusively, comes "from within the artist," as has for hundreds of years been the case with music. In this direction, painting has caught up with music, and both have a growing tendency of creating "absolute" masterpieces, that is fully "objective works," which resemble the works of nature and as separate, individual beings, grow "by themselves." These works are closer to that art which lives in the absolute and maybe they alone are designed to represent this absolute art.

* In this sense the Russian peasant law, previously mentioned, is also Christian and opposed to the heathen, Roman right. With daring logic the inner qualification can be explained thus: this act is not a crime when committed by this man, while in general and in the case of other people, it would be considered a crime. That is: In this case a crime is not a crime. And further: There is no absolute crime. (What a contrast to nulla poena sine lege!) Still further: Not the deed (the actual), but the root (the abstract) creates the bad (and good). And finally: Every deed is irrelevant. It stands on the border. The will gives it the push — it falls to the right, or to the left. The exterior flexibility and the inner precision is greatly developed in this case among the Russian people and I do not believe that I exaggerate, when I recognize a great ability in this direction among the Russians.

It is therefore not surprising, that nations, who have developed along the lines of the often valuable principles of the formal, outwardly very precise Roman law and spirit, (remember the *jus strictum* of former periods) shake their heads at Russian life or strongly criticize it. In superficial observation, this life which appears extraordinary to the strange eye, merely manifests the outer flexibility, which is considered unruliness, because the inner precision lies at a depth. That is the reason why the free thinking Russians show much more understanding of other nations than is shown to them. In many cases this understanding turns to enthusiasm.

** My "Spiritual on Art" was written and had been ready in my desk drawer for several years. The possibilities of putting the "Blue Rider" in practice, did not work out. Franc Marc opened the practical way for the first book. He also supported the second through his fine, understanding and talented spiritual cooperation and help.

The two books were and are often misunderstood. They are taken as "programs" and their authors are described as theorists, artists who have become entangled and perished in brain work.

Nothing, however, was further from me, than to appeal to the intellect, to the brain. This task would have been premature at this time and will confront the artists as the next, most important and unavoidable aim (step) in the further development of art. Nothing can and will be dangerous anymore to the established spirit which has taken strong roots; therefore the much feared mental work in art will also not be able to harm it.

After our before-mentioned trip to Italy and after a short return to Moscow, when I was barely five years old, my parents and my aunt, Elisabeth Tichejeff, to whom I owe as much as to my parents, had to move to Southern Russia (Odessa) for reasons of my father's health. Here I later attended the Gymnasium but always felt a temporary guest in this city, which was strange to my entire family. We never lost the wish of being able to return to Moscow and this city developed a longing in my heart similar to that described in Tschechoff's "Three Sisters." From my thirteenth year on, my father took me with him to Moscow every year; and when I was eighteen years old, I finally moved there with the feeling that I had at last returned to my home. My father hails from Eastern Siberia where his forefathers were banished from Western Siberia for political reasons. He was educated in Moscow and learned to love this city no less than his home. His deeply human and loving soul understood the "soul of Moscow" as well as the Moscow exterior. It is always a pleasure to me to hear when, for example, with solemn voice, he enumerates the numerous old churches, calling them by their wonderful old names. Doubtlessly, an artistic soul speaks

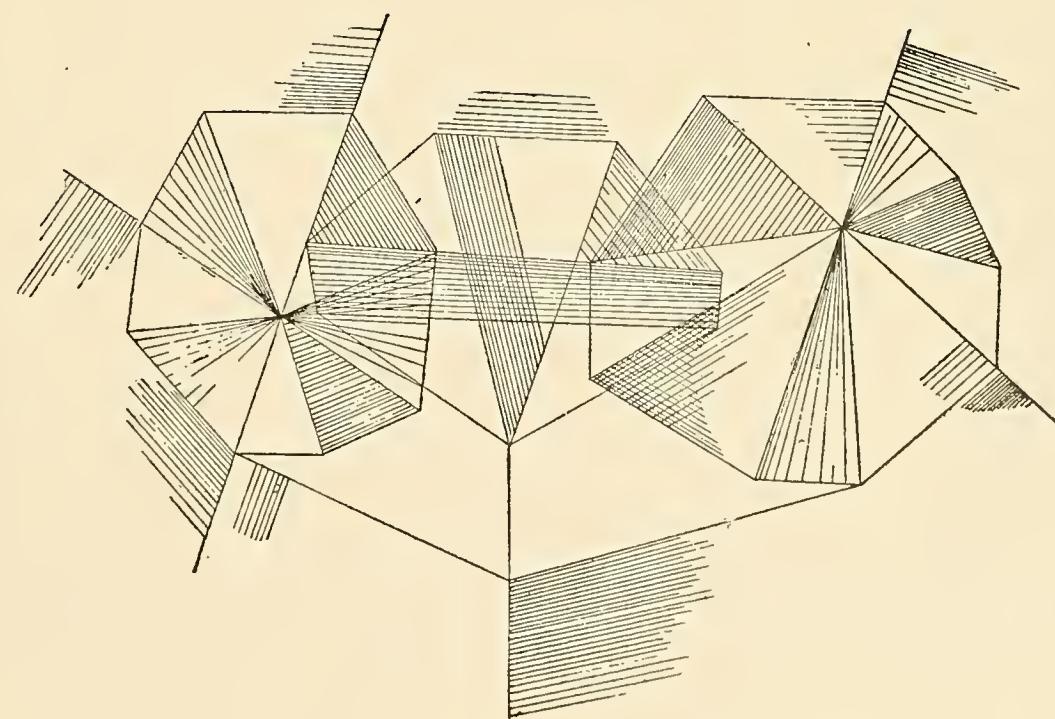
here. My mother was born in Moscow and embodied in her the qualities which to me meant Moscow: exterior striking, through and through earnest and strict beauty, noble simplicity, endless energy, a combination of great nervousness and striking majestic quiet and heroic self-control, combining tradition with true liberalism. Briefly—in human form the "white-stoned," "golden-haired" "Mother Moscow." Moscow: the duplicity, the complicity, the greatest flexibility, the collision and confusion in its outer appearance which in the end forms an own, uniform portrait, the same qualities in inner life, something that the strange eye cannot understand (that is the reason of the many, many contradicting opinions of foreigners regarding Moscow), which is so extraordinary and in the end so simple—this entire interior and exterior Moscow I consider the root of my artistic ambitions. It is my artistic tuning fork. I have the feeling that it was always thus and that as time went on and due to the exterior formal advances I constantly painted this "model" only with constantly stronger expression, in fully new form and am painting it today. The excursions which I have made here and there, off this road, on the whole did not harm me, a few dead signs, where I was exhausted and which I sometimes felt represented the end of my work, on the whole were starts and pauses, which enabled the next step.

In many things I must condemn myself, but to one I always remained true—the inner voice, which decided on my aim in art and as a result of which I hope up to the last hour.

Munich, June 1913.

KANDINSKY

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POINTED AND ROUND

1935



WASSILY KANDINSKY

in 1938

WASSILY KANDINSKY

It is no exaggeration to affirm, that Kandinsky remained most rigorously logical to himself of those painters whose watchword at the start of the 20th Century proclaimed a renewal in the Art of painting. He achieved, to an absolute degree, the pictorial revolution about which there were so many discussions at the end of the 19th Century.

Nevertheless, one is forced to realize that this profound prophet and most thorough of theorists of the movement of post-impressionistic revolt, remained less known, and even today not yet listened to, than a number of painters, who vulgarized his theories. While with the help of commerce (so much avoided by Kandinsky) they let their superficial mass production easily become accessible to visitors through exhibitions in museums. This very vulgarization was accompanied by an incredible concert of imprecations, insults, jeers, cries of indignation, and even threats, of which one hears today only belated echoes, diminished and without importance.

In the end, this renewal was only a regeneration of form, a new organization of matter, a simple autopsy of the third dimension; where form-problems were considered unconventionally and the surfaces were granted a new value. No need to underestimate the considerable share of aesthetics which these artists contributed to the patrimony of painting. It must be admitted that their efforts toward an absolute art, favored *a priori* the validity of the invisible reality as soucre of rhythmic inspiration and as the subject of creation. If we should recall that the word "Abstraction" indicates an operation of the mind by which we consider a particular element of the so-called reality, we could even say, that these painters were realists in the measure in which they visionarily were inspired by such a reality, in the degree of their personalities.

It is the domain of "pure effusion" which Kandinsky chooses for his field of operation. For him, art "belongs to the spiritual life." The problem of the painter is not to reflect nature through the prism of his personality, but to exteriorize intuitively the prism itself, where the feelings are born, the evolutions of the artist, those "vibrations of the human soul," in which Kandinsky sees the most important source of aesthetic creation. The story element, the charm of style in a painting are non-pictorial accidents, the consideration of which belongs to an entirely different domain. Creative paintings touch the spectators' heart, otherwise than by what ordinarily is experienced, with objective paintings. It is by its "inherent ordered" Rhythm that a Non-objective canvas ought to move the one who looks at it, so as to rouse the emergence of spiritual affinities between his soul and that of the painter. What painting has to say

cannot be expressed in words, nor ranked in a material category. A sort of osmosis on the mental plane ought to take place, through which the spectator identifies himself spiritually with the creator of such paintings. Kandinsky cannot help scoffing at those who are incapable of this attitude. In his book, "On the Spiritual in Art" (complete text in the works of the All Russian Art Conference, St. Petersburg 1913) he writes: "Our materialistic age has produced a type of spectator or 'connoisseur,' who is not content to put himself opposite a picture and let it say its own message. Instead of allowing the inner value of the picture to work on him, he worries himself by looking for 'closeness to nature,' or a 'meaning' or 'temperament,' or 'handling,' or 'Tonality,' or 'perspective,' or what-not. His eye does not probe the outer expression to arrive at the inner meaning." In short, each picture is a challenge to the sensibility of the spectator, daring him to join the painter on the immaterial plane, which is his, and to taste the same spiritual joys. In a letter, Kandinsky specifies the attitude he asks of the public, explaining that the spectator must learn to look at a picture as the graphic expression of a spiritual force, and not as a representation of objects. (A. J. Eddy, "Cubists and Post-Impressionism".)

Thus painting is the direct expression of a state of mind, that is to say, a complexity of intuitive creative feelings, varied and sometimes even contradictory; conditioned by the formation of the artists' intelligence. While certain progressive elements induce his life's evolutionary advancement, through tragic or happy influences, which reacting in profound intensity evolve into strength the outline of his growing personality, this entirety of spiritual conditions could not find its formal equivalent in the earthly realm. To exteriorize it, by applying it to natural forms, would be to corrupt it, deprive it of innermost qualities and reduce it to such small proportions as could be momentarily a surprising and, at best, a news item.

The real problem of a painter is not that of the photographer, who strives to reproduce something he finds worth to hold down, merely stamping it with his trademark of a personal choice in his pictorial selection. The creative painter is somewhat similar to the musician, who feels no task reproducing the sounds he hears around him, but who, on the contrary, exteriorizes only the creative rhythm while making audible such harmonies, the painter makes such rhythm visible. A hearer "will like" or "will not like" a piece of music, according to whether or not it will find sympathetic echoes in his soul. In any event, primarily the musician realizes his expression of emotions in their pure state. He finds the means to communicate his intimate experiences to others

without having recourse to any static pretense of reality, so as to sublime his intensities. While the painter was forced to this by public need—before, at last, photography gave him the spiritual freedom enjoyed by the musicians. In the case of the painter, this freedom is expressed with the means of the elements of his art. The composing of forms, tone values, colors, space dimensions, which are combined according to their pictorial counterpoint, relative only to the spiritual sensibilities of the artists' creative receivership.

The creative painter of today cannot be satisfied by representation, however artistic, in his desire to express his inner life. He does not envy any more the ease of freedom in music's incorporeal art. As so evidently the painting's superior expression of inventive imagination is more profound, more visionary and consequently of far stronger, more lasting and ordering influence. With rhythmic law of constructive counterpoint, he sets in motion harmonies of color and form, in the given space. In order to clarify the existing correlations of such intense concentration of feeling and its pictorial creation, Kandinsky tried in his treatise and culture programs to undertake a profound study of the theoretic and technical elements of his art, to which he was almost too close to see its importance. He was interested in the fact that a classical French landscape painter of the XIX Century, Henri Rové, had declared "the laws of harmony of painting and of music to be the same." ("Tendances Nouvelles," No. 35, quoted in "On the Spiritual in Art.") Kandinsky was led to discover and formulate the ideal, which constitutes the essential of his art and renders the value to his theories on painting. The revelation and use of the pictorial counterpoint induces progress and opens the gate to the contact with the infinite.

In music as in painting exists the rule of counterpoint with which to create the lawful form element. Perfection of such counterpoint in a Non-objective painting, rich of thematical variety, provides it with the true mark of genius. Without it, such a canvas presents just a collection of patterns or accidental sketches which are of as much significance to art, as some accidental sounds produced on a piano could be to a symphony. Also into this category belong symmetrical decorations which are as far from a creative invention as scales are able to produce a sonata. It is by organization of the subtle interaction, that harmonious aesthetic coherence gives evidence and power to any essential, spirited message. It allows a painter to give the true measure of his innermost evolution. In objective painting, this integration, an aesthetic pleasure in itself, is not sought for. Its results of research amplify the banality of eternally boring repetition, and repetition of objects depicted endlessly. The correlation which is established in the mind of the spectator between the subject of the picture and his own experience or memory of that subject is not of any lasting interest. Therefore,

the representational painting over and over again tells the same old story of landscapes, portraits, endlessly banal still-lifes, which even could there be a change, cannot but for a short moment hold our attention to prevent the usual yawning, with which our reaction, to pictorially so over-crowded existence has nowadays become identified. The divine result of our escape into the loftier realms of imagination, to eternal relief, releases us to a spiritual freedom of endless interest; here the varieties of frequencies are constantly new, effective on those not blinded by earthly boredom, of curiosity without surprises left. The non-objective painting's unending possibilities of basic form problems are beyond the static still-life of portraits. Artistic forms have done away with the untruth of pretense in perspective, deceit so easily taught, so contrary to pictorial elements.

The spiritual element of counterpoint in creative painting constitutes the acme of aesthetic value. Kandinsky defines thus its divers components: "The concord or discord in various elements of a picture, the handling of groups, the combination of veiled or openly expressed appeals, the use of rhythmical and unrhythmical, of geometrical or non-geometrical forms, of continuity or separation—all these things constitute material for counterpoint in painting." ("The Art of Spiritual Harmony.")

In Kandinsky's work this counterpoint is undeniably the dominant quality which gives to his pictures their force of cohesion. It allows forms, extremely rich in their almost unending variety, colors of strikingly daring or dull tonality, to coexist in the space encompassed by a frame. According to an inner rhythm, in which each of these elements finds its relation to its neighbors, so as a creation it is as unique as every human being. It is the spiritual presence of such counterpoint, which gives to Kandinsky's canvases this spiritual quality of validity, whether past, present or future as this eternal value, based on the immortality of all true aesthetic manifestations of the soul.

Non-objective painting possesses the peculiarity of evading the rules of past epochs. It obeys to the superior law of the universe, the existence of which for the artist has the power of sensorial postulate. Through the omniscience of the artists' intuition and the subtlety of his sensibility, he directs his faculties of exteriorization towards the spiritual domain which in reality is theirs, of the degree in which they have assimilated the ineffable mechanism, and which Kandinsky expressed, by saying: "That which has no material existence cannot be subjected to a material existence nor can it be subjected to any material classification." Therefore, that which belongs to the part of its spiritual message in the picture, can only be received and realized by the onlooker's feeling in meeting the artist's message half way—by the simple message "to be enjoyed." To be liked by some or disliked by others does not

change the superiority of Bach's music. Nor does the personal likes or dislikes of critics or the public affects the value of any art.

It is interesting to recall the chance incident, which set Kandinsky on the track of his theory of Non-objective painting. That evening in 1905, as he was entering his studio, his gaze drawn to a picture in a dark corner of the room. It conveyed great beauty, an almost mystical harmony of colors and surface. Kandinsky, coming close to it, discovered that the picture was standing sideways, consequently, what appealed to him so much was no result of subjective influence, evidently the purely pictorial effect of elements, therefore, could result in such really magical enjoyment. This episode had a decisive influence in the evolution of Kandinsky's painting.

What he had visualized before hazily now suddenly became clear to his mind. At last he knew and felt how he must paint; free of objective hindrance, so harmful to the pictorial element. He now understood that the object had no place in his pictures.

To eliminate it entirely was the stepping stone, to what was to become soon the theoretic and practical renewal of his art, if not of art itself.

Kandinsky wrote in 1935 to Hilla Rebay "It has always been my conviction that this kind of painting at least has no less possibilities than the objective — rather more! I think absolutely: more!

"The great differences of the pictures must appear sufficient even to the most 'stubborn skeptic' to shake the mental prejudice against absolute form. Of course, if the skeptic wishes to see. One can, if one wishes, be blind even with open eyes. There are no remedies against this. That in the evil conditions of our days, culture and art suffer most, is more than correct. Luckily we are not the only ones who see this clearly. Here and there one hears voices today who speak energetically of the lost feeling of honor, the disappearance of the thirst for spirit, the devastating lack of interest in matters of culture. Yet, today such voices are "voices in a desert." As an unconvertible optimist I feel and believe, that in the end their hopes will win.

When? is another question. Yet we are branded as whimsy individuals and impractical people. But with time soft drops of water work holes into the hard stone. If we bear in mind that the present crisis is not only a bank, economic and business crisis, but mainly a psychosis, the soft drop turns into a hard drop and the hard stone into a soft stone. Even this crisis is only a small part of the much deeper reaching spiritual crisis."

"The creative power of us artists, which seemingly today 'passes by life itself,' already today, like the drop of water, gradually rebuilds the spiritual world. I am not ashamed to make such a statement. So, long live the future, long live 1935."

Kandinsky's interest in art and the things of the mind had been awakened early in him by his father, who was gifted with a real talent for drawing, and by Elizabeth Tichejeff, his mother's older sister, to whom he owes so much for his interest in music, folklore, literature and "the profound essence of the Russian people."

For this reason Rural law especially interested him: To study it he made a trip to the Northeast, to inform himself on pagan religion of the Syrienes. His travel impressions in this picturesque Russian countryside, his visits to peasant houses, with their brilliantly colored interiors as his reactions to the vivid colors of the Kremlin fill his eyes with the play of variations in luminous or mysterious colors, which still may be found in his early canvases.

At the termination of his law studies, Kandinsky got the title of Attache of Jurisprudence at the Court of Justice in Moscow. The University of Dorpat (Tartu in Estonia) offered him a professorship. The year is 1896; Kandinsky was thirty years old; he was at the turning point of his life. So he took an irrevocable decision: He abandoned a safe career and left for Munich to study painting, "putting a final period to long studies of preceding years."

Already in those days, the atmosphere of Munich was very troubled. The struggle against modernism in artistic expression was in full swing. Kandinsky first studied at the school of Anton Azbe, who "of Slav origin, was a gifted painter and a man of rare qualities of the soul." He remained there two years, then he finally was admitted to the Royal Academy in Munich to study under Franz V. Stuck, who had the reputation of being "the first draftsman of Germany." But the instruction he received did not satisfy him. In 1902, he opened his own art school, which he closed soon to undertake a series of travels. These brought him in contact with the many sides of movements by modern painters in European countries. He thus familiarized himself with Seurat, van Gogh, Cezanne, Matisse, Delaunay, Gleizes, Picasso and other painters, between 1903 and 1908. In turn he visited Tunisia, Italy, Paris, Berlin. His paintings did not show any marked influence by the innovations of contemporary artists nor did they reflect the atmosphere of countries through which he passed. Kandinsky was so completely Russian that even his later landscapes attested to the durable impression caused by the variety of colors of his native land, while other canvases showed by their almost primitive style how close he was to the intensity of Russian folk's art expression.

So he returned to Munich, where soon after occurred the magical incident of the picture at dusk and through it the realization of the superfluousness of the object in any painting. It took two years in getting fully crystallized. The canvases of this period, although still abstractions of objects, use these primarily as structural elements, while form and color dominated their ob-

jective inspiration. In 1910, he finished "Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst," translated into English "On the Spiritual in Art," a theoretical treatise on art. In it he establishes the philosophical basis of Non-objective painting; and it was published in 1912 in Munich, only two years later, and 1914 in London, though incomplete.

The period from 1910 to 1914 is the one of the "Der Blaue Reiter," ("Blue Rider") the name of a group devoted to the renewal of painting, which was formed by Kandinsky, and in the orbit of which gravitated painters like Franz Marc, August Macke, Paul Klee and Jawlensky. At that time, about 1911, he exhibited his first entirely Non-objective canvas and wildest controversy, lies, insults, were started. While his renown was beginning to spread among those, who were interested in creativeness or opposed to it, his canvases started feverish comments everywhere at their exhibitions.

The Armory show of 1913, a nucleus from the famous Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne of 1912, brought to New York by Marie Stern, showed for the first time also Kandinsky's paintings, for one of which Alfred Stieglitz paid \$800, a sacrifice to him at that time, when he became the first in the U. S. A. to own one of these great paintings. These created a sensation, also afterwards in Chicago, as later in London's Albert Hall. There two improvisations by Kandinsky and a landscape, were described as the best paintings there; the critic added "the landscape is easier to interpret, but that is all, and more."

Subsequently Kandinsky's "Improvisations" became more definite, more logically ordered and more closely knit in feeling and structure, as well as more surprisingly beautiful in their apposing colors, more precise in their equilibrium. Yet to call them "pure visual music," was a term which Kandinsky disliked.

Yet the intense spontaneity of organized force in such vast contrast to the lyrical tenderness of these paintings, creates a vivid interplay. An artistic expression which in later years is prevented, due to his advance in the science of counterpoint, yet his theoretical research developed other problems in the Realm of space precision and the composition so essential to the infinite appeal of the paintings' serene quietude. The period from 1922-1928 people called his cold period and again he was abused for it. Soon enough these paintings were in possession of private collectors who began to realize his unerring strife for pictorial perfection.

Between 1914 and 1921, Kandinsky had lived in Russia. Circumstances prevented him from doing much work, and it is only by their darker colors that we distinguish his canvases of the period 1914 to 1919, while all these paintings contain the same lyrical poetry. In 1919 he finds, simultaneously used in her paper paintings from Alsace by Hilla Rebay, and what later Bauer used in his white fugue, the intense precision of intricate space dimension, induced by the use of a cruel white or (as

Kandinsky did) of very light backgrounds. Such cruel white does not permit the ease of modulating tone values between forms, which hide vague tonal indecisions of the realistic era paintings.

In 1918, Kandinsky was named member of the Art Section of the People's Commissariat of Public Education and professor of Aesthetic Science at the Academy of Fine Art in Moscow. In 1919, he became Director of the Museum of Pictorial Culture and as such founded the Institute of Artistic Culture for which he wrote the culture plan. In 1920, he was named professor at the University of Moscow. In 1921 he created the Academy of Artistic Science, of which he became Vice-President. Also at this time did he organize for the government a group of 43 museums destined to diffuse popular culture.

Late in 1921, Kandinsky returned to Berlin, where at the Wallerstein Gallery he exhibited canvases with these light backgrounds and delicate colors often sharply contrasted by decided black, as a constructive counterpoint. Since 1923, he taught at the well-known Bauhaus, first established in Weimar, later in Dessau. When the authorities ordered its closing in 1933, Kandinsky left that city via Berlin to finally settle down in Paris, where he remained up to his recent death, December 13th, 1944.

The pictures of the 1922-1928 period show the variety of Kandinsky's talent. His painting frees itself more and more by seeking and finding his inspiration entirely in the sensibilities of the balance of space and that of the absolute vision, which he recently called a concrete one after having taken complete possession of his medium to express the intricacies "of pictorial techniques." More and more Kandinsky's paintings give evidence of his technical mastership. His continual research to increase the infinite possibilities of Non-objective painting never failed to proclaim the rhythmic form ideal, which replaced the static one of the past. That profound spontaneity with which he had created from 1910-1919 extraordinarily rare masterpieces; of such lyrical magic, as the famous "White Edge," the gorgeous "Black Lines," "Red Spot," "Light Picture," "White Center," as well as his compositions and "Improvisations," with which his reputation attained such immediate height. In his last years, height may have easily returned to him when due to the sufferings from the war turmoil, such deep emotions may have been revived once his mastership of technique and space-balance had freed him again, so as to enable him to spontaneous intuitive reaction as a possibility. Also as a possibility to overcome the deprivation and terror of war, to which his very last years had been exposed. His last paintings, from 1938-1944, unknown to us here due to war-conditions, quite possibly express again a great lyrical intensity. They were exhibited in Paris in November and December, 1944, during Kandinsky's last grave illness. This "enormously

"successful" exhibition had to be extended after his death, which occurred on December 13, 1944.

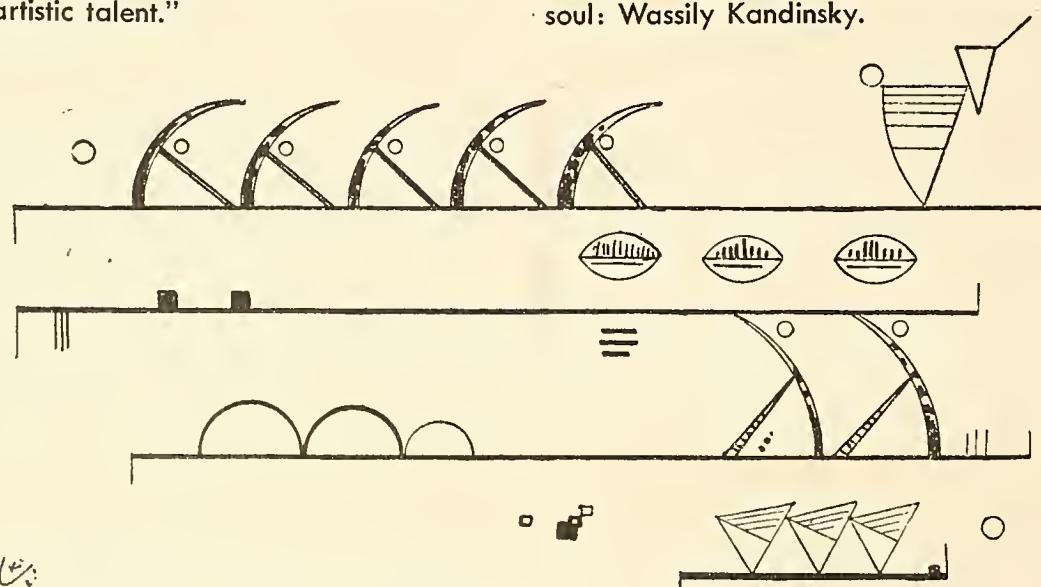
The profound truth of his theories impress to a growing degree, those, who are able to feel aesthetic enjoyment through his paintings. The prophetic nature of these paintings evokes and proclaims a spiritual ideal which is to dominate a new era. When intuitive evolution proclaims the right of mankind, it enters visionarily into the absolute domain of universal order, directing culture to advance into the absolute, equalled by civilization's increasing attainment to ease life on the material side.

This constitutes the beginning of a new epoch of Humanity, to which such a master as Kandinsky was the unerring prophet. Aesthetic culture's practical side is the one above all vicissitudes of social cross-currents, which helps to break up materialistic urge, until its enlightened spiritual reality is found to be the unerringly safe and only protection of mankind.

Naturally, Kandinsky was profoundly conscious of the revolutionary and messianic character of his art. To him, the true artist is endowed with "a secret power of vision" which makes him the standard bearer for all those, who believe in the spiritual evolution of humanity. "Painting is an art," he declares, "and is not a vague production, transitory and isolated, but a power which must be directed for the improvement and refinement of the human soul." (On the Spiritual of Art.) He is violently opposed to esoterism in art, which intends to monopolize the universal value of beauty, for the benefit of a few intellectualists or a clique of false aesthetics. He rebukes them for having lost sight of the educational role of art and, having no message to impart, to extol the importance of the exterior aspect of the work. "The artist must have something to say, for mastery over form is not his goal, but rather the adapting of form to its inner meaning." (On the Spiritual of Art.) And to those who try to divorce the artist from the time in which he lives, Kandinsky says that their theory of "art for art" is precisely, "this neglect of inner meaning" by which "art becomes purposeless" because of "vain squandering of artistic talent."

"Every work of art is the child of its age," is the affirmation by which Kandinsky starts one of his books. The needs and aspirations of each epoch are reflected, with diverse exact degrees, in contemporary aesthetic manifestations. But these are not necessarily intelligible to a great number of people, whose education, origin or background have conditioned them to hang on to an artistic conception out of date long ago and far removed from present human evolution. The artist is not really in advance of his age, as is currently said; it is only the public who has not caught up with him. For the creative artist, who by a super-normal perception is permitted to grasp and express clearly the yet obscure, reacts particularly sensitive to his intuitive contact with universal force which artistically expresses the Creator of the All. To precisely diffuse the revelation with which prophetically Kandinsky was favored, results in the realization that all that was the truth for him, is bound to become the truth for All. As Kandinsky said, "art which is capable of educating further, springs equally from contemporary feeling. It is not only the echo and mirror of it, but also has a deep and powerful prophetic strength." (On the Spiritual of Art.) The artistic appreciation of cosmic order beyond objective representation gives to Non-objective painting the capacity of extending such spiritual influence, which increases with the passage of time — in sharp contrast to any representation of everlasting repetitious, boring objective paintings which reached their last limits; and are now being left behind.

Spiritual Resurrection through art responds in general to the highest human ideals. Open to the influence of harmony and balance it already opposes congealed dead representation in their pretense of reality, henceforth without secrets. To give way to the dynamic exteriorization of the absolute, in its vital beautiful essence. The so satisfied needs of empirical knowledge reveal the pure joys of intuitive perception. For all that and for still more, future generations will become more grateful than we can be to this great master. We already feel indebted to him who was able to rise above human nature, to probe with passion, confidence and courage the mysterious waves of the soul: Wassily Kandinsky.





RIGID AND BENT

1936

PAINTING AS A PURE ART

BY WASSILY KANDINSKY 1914.

CONTENT AND FORM:

The work of art consists of two elements: the inner and the outer. The inner element, taken individually, is the emotion of the artist's soul. The emotion has the ability of creating a basically corresponding emotion in the observer's soul.

As long as the soul is connected with the body, it can as a rule receive vibrations only through the medium of feeling. The feeling, therefore, is a bridge from the non-material to the material (Artist) and from the material to the non-material (Observer). Emotion — Feeling — Work of Art — Feeling — Emotion.

The inner element of a work of art is its content. Thus spiritual vibration must exist. If this is not the case, a work of art cannot be created. That is, only a pretense can be created.

The inner element, created by the vibration of the soul, is the content of the work of art. Without an inner content no work of art can exist.

So that the content which first lives in an "abstract" form may be shaped into a work of art, the second element — the exterior — must serve to make it concrete. For this reason the content looks for a means of expression, a "material" form.

Thus the work of art is an inseparable amalgamation of the inner and outer element, the content and form.

The decisive element is that of the content. The form is the material expression of the abstract content.

The choice of the form is therefore decided by the inner spiritual necessity which is the only real unchanging law of art.

A work of art, which has been created in the aforementioned manner is "beautiful." Thus a beautiful work of art is a legitimate combination of the two elements of the inner and the outer.

This combination makes the work of art homogenous. The work of art becomes an object. As a painting it is a spiritual organism which, like all material organisms, consists of many individual parts. These individual parts, taken separately, are lifeless, like a cut-off finger. The life of the finger and its appropriate effect is dependent on its lawful connection with the other parts of the body. The legitimate combination is the construction.

Like the work of art, the work of nature is subject to the same law: the law of construction. The individual parts only become alive through the whole.

The endless number of individual parts in painting are divided into two groups:

The drawn form and
The painted form.

The systematic and proper combination of the individual parts of both groups results in the painting.

NATURE.

When we apply these two definitions (component parts of the work of art and particularly the painting) to individual works, we encounter the apparently coincidental existences of strange component parts in the painting. That is so-called nature. In our two definitions nature was not assigned a place. How did it get into the painting?

The origin of painting is the same as that of any other art or any human act. It was purely practical.

If a savage hunter follows the game for days, he is prompted by hunger.

If a royal hunter today goes on a chase, he is prompted by pleasure. While hunger is a material value, is the pleasure here an aesthetic value?

If a savage makes artificial noises for a dance, he is prompted by sexual instinct.

When modern man goes to a concert, he does not look for a practical auxiliary means in music, but for pleasure.

Here too, the original physico-practical instinct has become aesthetic. That means, here the original physical need has become a spiritual need.

In this refinement (or spiritualization) of the simplest practical (or physical) means two results can be observed throughout: the segregation of the spiritual element from the physical and its further independent development, thus creating various forms of art.

Here, very gradually and constantly more and more precise, the above-mentioned laws (of content and form) interpose and finally create a pure art from any transitory art. That is a quite logical, natural growth, like the growth of a tree.

PAINTING

The same procedure is noticed in painting. First period, Origin: practical desire to retain the perishable physical.

Second period, Development: the gradual segregation from this practical purpose and the gradual predominance of the spiritual element.

Third period, Aim: The reaching to the higher step of pure art; in it the remnants of practical desire are completely segregated. It speaks in an artistic language from spirit to spirit and is a realm of artistic spiritual beings (subjects).

In today's position of painting we can notice all three indications in various constellations and degrees. The indication of development (the second period) is the decisive one, i.e.:

First period: Realistic Painting (Realism is understood here as it traditionally developed up into the nineteenth century): Predominance of the indication of origin—the practical desire, the perishable physical to be retained (portraits, landscapes, painting of history in a direct sense).

Second Period: Naturalist Painting (in the form of Impressionism, Neo Impressionism and Futurism), the segregation from the practical purpose and the gradual predominance of the spiritual element (from Impressionism through Neo Impressionism to Futurism constantly greater segregation and constantly greater predominance).

In this period the inner desire to give the spiritual exclusive importance is so intense, that the impressionist "Credo" already says "The important thing in art is not the 'what' (by which is not meant the artistic content but nature) but the 'how'."

Apparently so little importance is attached to the last remnants of the first period (Origin) that nature as such is no longer fully considered. Apparently nature was only considered the starting point, an excuse for giving expression to the spiritual content. In any event, these component parts of the "Credo" were already recognized and proclaimed by the Impressionists.

In reality, however, this "Credo" is only a "pium desiderium" of the painting of the second period.

If the choice of the object (nature) were immaterial to this form of painting, it would not have to look for any "motives". Here the object demands the treatment, the choice of form does not remain free but is dependent on the object.

If we exclude the objective (object) from a painting of this period and thus leave only the purely artistic in the painting, we immediately notice that this objective (object) forms a kind of support without which the purely artistic structure (construction) breaks down due to lack of forms. Or it is found that after this exclusion only completely indefinite, coincidental artistic forms (in an embryo state), unable to exist by them-

selves, remain on the canvas. Thus in such painting nature (the "what" in this sense of painting) is not coincidental, but important.

This exclusion of the practical element, the objective (nature) is only possible if this component part is substituted by another important component. And that is the purely artistic form which can give the painting the power of independent life and is capable of lifting the painting to the height of a spiritual object. It is evident that this important component part is the above described and defined construction.

This substitute we find in the third period which is beginning today: Compositional painting.

According to the beforementioned schedule of three periods, we have therefore arrived at the third period, which was designated as the aim.

In compositional painting which is today developing in front of our eyes, we immediately see: The distinguishing marks of the attainment of the higher step in pure art, in which the remnants of practical desire can be completely segregated and speak a purely artistic language from spirit to spirit, and which is a realm of graphical-spiritual essence.

It will immediately be clear and unquestionable to anyone, that a painting of this third period which has no support in a practical purpose (of the first period) or the spiritual content objectively supported (of the second period), can only exist as a constructive being.

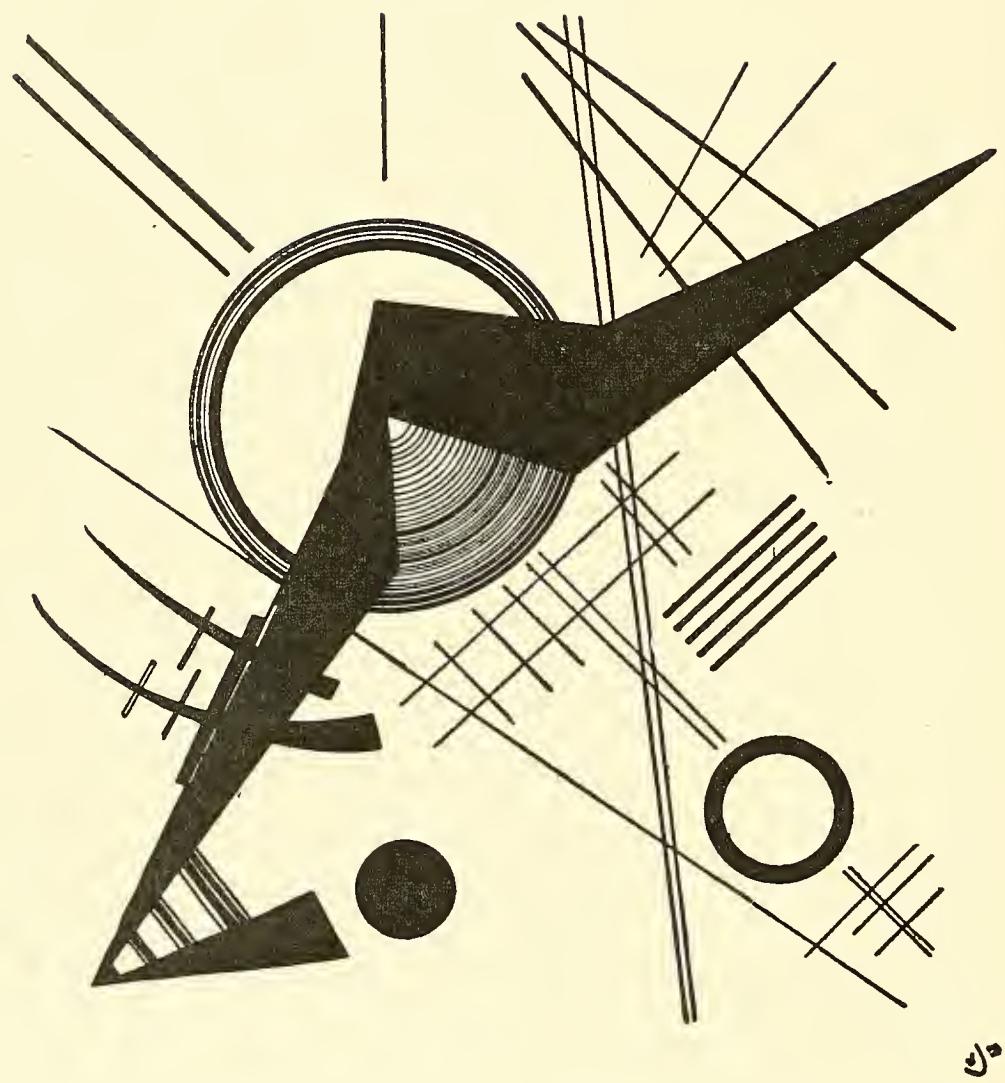
The today strong (and constantly stronger) appearing, conscious or subconscious, effort of replacing the object by construction, is the first step to the commencement of pure art for the final attainment, for which the past periods of art were unavoidable and legitimate.

Thus I have tried briefly to schematically discuss the entire development and particularly the situation of today.

That is why so many gaps had to be left open. That is why I have mentioned nothing of detours and deviations which are unavoidable in any development, such as the side branches on a tree, though it is lifted to the sky.

The further development which painting is facing, will also suffer many contradictions, deviations—as was experienced in music, which we today already know, as pure art.

The past has taught us that the development of humanity consists of the spiritualization of many values. Among these values art occupies the first place and painting is traveling the road which leads it from the practical adequate to the spiritual adequate. From the objective to the creative composition.



5

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R E P R O D U C T I O N S I N C O L O R

Watercolor, 1911, sketch to the "Composition No. 4," taken from the "Blue Rider," edited 1912 by Kandinsky.	8
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The following paintings are owned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York,
and permanently on view at the Museum of Non-objective Paintings, New York.

THE WHITE EDGE (1913) oil on canvas 55 x 75	17
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